

Land Usage

“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.” –Maya Angelou

Background Information:

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This is the third activity in a series of outdoor recreation activities. In the first, students engage in nature play to build a positive connection to nature. In the second activity, students further their connection to local landscapes by mapping the area and identifying points that are important to them and feeling autonomy and connection through fort building.

In this lesson students who have developed positive environmental feelings and behaviors will use that in order to learn more about proper usage for local public lands and create a way to share that information with the public.

Information for Instructors

One of the greatest public resources across America are our public lands. There are many different types of designations for public lands that depend on the type of land it is and also help determine what type of use is allowed for the area. For example, national parks are best known, and can only be created by Congress. National forests are managed by the U.S. Forest service and are multiple use, so in addition to recreation opportunities, there may also be timber harvesting, grazing, or mining occurring.

On a more local level, Lakeville, MN has 62 parks and over 100 miles of trails available to the public. The parks can vary greatly in size, appearance, permitted activities, and even who they are managed by. Compare Murphy-Hanrehan Park Reserve which is mostly undeveloped and managed by a joint agreement with the Three Rivers Parks District and Scott County, and Steve Michaud Park which contains a playground and soccer fields and is managed by the city.

Through this lesson, students will learn more about the differences in our local public lands, and how those differences affect the way that we use them.

Materials and Set-Up:

You will need:

- Whiteboard or equivalent

Author:

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Themes:

Outdoor Recreation, Social Action,

Estimated Duration:

55 minutes

Audience Identified:

6th-12th Grade

Location:

Classroom

Goal:

Students will learn about proper land use for different types of land and create a flyer or sign to share the information learned with the public.

Objectives:

Students will be able to answer what activities are permitted for a specific piece of land.

Students will be able to identify reasons why different activities can or can't be done in different areas.

- Internet accessing devices for research
- Paper for each student (if not designing digitally)

Set-Up:

- No set up is necessary for this lesson

Introduction:

Estimated Duration: 5 minutes

Warm Up

As a group, ask students to share some of their favorite outdoor recreation activities, and where they like to do them in the area. You may choose to record a list of places and activities on the board as they do so.

After that is done, ask students to share if they have ever run into any trouble while recreating outdoors. Allow students to answer freely, but if needed, give the following as prompts:

- Have you ever had an issue with someone who was in the same space as you, but doing a different activity?
- Have there been times where you wanted to do an activity only to find out that it wasn't allowed in a certain location?
- Have you ever been unsure about what was or wasn't allowed in a spot?
- Have you ever felt frustrated that other people were not taking care of a spot that you liked, such as leaving trash?

After the discussion, tell students that today, they will be learning more about different public lands by researching them, and then presenting that information in a way that is easily sharable to the public to encourage a better experience for all.

Content and Methods:

Estimated Duration: 30 minutes

- Have each student pick a location. It could be a park or area that has personal significance to them, or chosen somewhat randomly, but ideally it is somewhere that they have visited at least once.
- Students will use their devices to research some basic information about their location. Then they will use that to design a sample of either a sign or a flyer that will share information about the location to people who are recreating there.
- While students start their research, write the criteria listed in the evaluation section on the board to give guidelines for the students when they are designing their signs or flyers.
- The signs and flyers can be either be designed digitally, or on paper, depending on what is more applicable for your group. They should be easy to read and clear. Content is most important, but if there is time design work can be done as well.

Conclusion:

Estimated Duration: 10 minutes

Come back together into a large group. Allow time where students can volunteer to briefly share their flyers or signs. Each person sharing should take 1-2 minutes.

Reflection and Evaluation:

Estimated Duration: 10 minutes

Reflection

After people have shared their flyers or signs in the conclusion, as a group, discuss the following questions:

- What was something new that you learned?
- Were there any things that you disagreed with? (This could either be too strict or too loose restrictions.) Why?
- How would you rate your personal concern for proper use of public land?
- Are there things that you have done in the past that were not proper use of land?
- Are there any behaviors that you plan to change going forward? Why or why not?

Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on this activity based on the finished product of their flyer or sign. Students will be considered successful if their product meets the following criteria:

- Identifies a specific park or other piece of public land and information about its features and management
- Contains a list of activities that are allowed in the park and a list of activities that are not allowed
- Information is easy to read and well formatted

For high school, consider also evaluating based on the following criteria:

- Choose one activity that is not permitted in the location and go more into depth on it
 - Identify why it is not permitted
 - Include a short persuasive argument for why people should follow the land usage guidelines
 - Find and list a location where that activity would be permissible

Extensions:

Accessibility and Accommodations

Distance Learning: This activity can be easily adapted for distance learning by giving the parameters to the class and assigning the main work to be done as homework. Sharing the final product can be done with just the instructor, or web conferencing can be used as a platform for students to share with the whole class.

Service Project

To extend this activity into a service project, make the following adjustments:

- Have students do research on Lakeville parks or other local areas and then pick one that is special to them as a group.

- Spend a chunk of time in the area with the purpose of evaluating if the land is being used appropriately or not.
- Identify between 1-3 ways that the park could be improved and come up with a targeted plan to address these improvement areas, including raising public awareness.
- Determine if any of the steps require working alongside another organization and put in a plan to implement.

Reference Materials:

Murphy-Hanrehan Park Reserve. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.threeriversparks.org/location/murphy-hanrehan-park-reserve>

U.S. Department of the Interior (2016). America's Public Lands Explained. Retrieved from <https://www.doi.gov/blog/americas-public-lands-explained>

