

Mystery Skype Lesson Plan

BACKGROUND:

Students learn about different regions of the world including the climate, landforms, resources, economy, and people of those regions. Mystery Skype is a connected learning experience that allows student-driven learning, inquiry, and deductive reasoning to be at the forefront of instruction. In a Mystery Skype session, a call is received by another class, but neither class knows the location of the other.

Using geography questions, students use maps and construct questions to ask the other class in order to determine their location first! Students build inquiry skills, learning how to formulate questions that will further their learning.

Question askers and map-readers work together to figure out the questions that will best narrow down the location of the other class, while recorders write down the information learned and the answering team receives questions from the other class. The role of the teacher is to facilitate – to help direct the Skype call, and to encourage students to use the information they gain to formulate questions as they learn. Mystery Skype calls take approximately 20-30 minutes and are easy to schedule.

OBJECTIVE: Identify specific place based on a mystery location using skills: longitude, latitude, cardinal directions, capitals, and knowledge of maps and regional facts.

ACTIVITIES:

Students are responsible for locating states, capitals, and counties on a map. The interactive and engaging lesson takes the skill beyond map location where are connected to a mystery classroom via Skype. The students construct questions based on learned map skills to uncover the mystery classroom's location

Procedures:

1. Initial communication: Communicate through email with another classroom in the world.
2. Prior to the Skype call with the mystery classroom, **the classroom teacher is responsible to** assign students individual roles or team roles.
3. The mystery classroom will also have the same roles. Teachers will need to keep class focused to the task on hand. Once both locations are discovered, students from each location can ask questions about school, state, region, etc. This allows for less formal questioning to end the Skype connection.

MATERIALS: Skype software, internet connection, video cam, speakers, whiteboards/markers, atlas, maps to write on, Google Maps, list of skills learned and definitions

MODIFICATIONS/DIFFERENTIATION: ([From Discovery Learning](#))

1. Twenty Questions

Recommended for grades k-2

Students in each class prepare a set of 20 questions and 5-10 clues for the other class before their call. The classes try to guess each other's location by answering the questions and using additional clues for a little extra help. This can work well for your first Mystery Skype lesson and is a good way to improve your students' knowledge of where they live.

2. Yes or no answers

Recommended for grades 3-8

Classes are only allowed to ask each other questions which will get a yes or no answer. The number of questions may be limited to 20 if you want an additional challenge. These lessons can be more spontaneous and require students to think on their feet as the questions aren't prepared in advance.

3. [Mystery Skype Jobs](#)

Recommended for grades 3-8

Some teachers have found that when students have specific responsibilities during a Mystery Skype lesson they work better as a team and the whole class becomes more engaged.

These roles can include greeters, question keepers, Bing mappers, runners, bloggers, photographers, live tweeters, reporters, and anything else that works for your class.

REFLECTION:

As a class, discuss what worked well, what was a challenge, what job students would want next time, should additional jobs be added, etc. Ask students to think about differences and commonalities. Ask questions like "Did anything surprise you?"