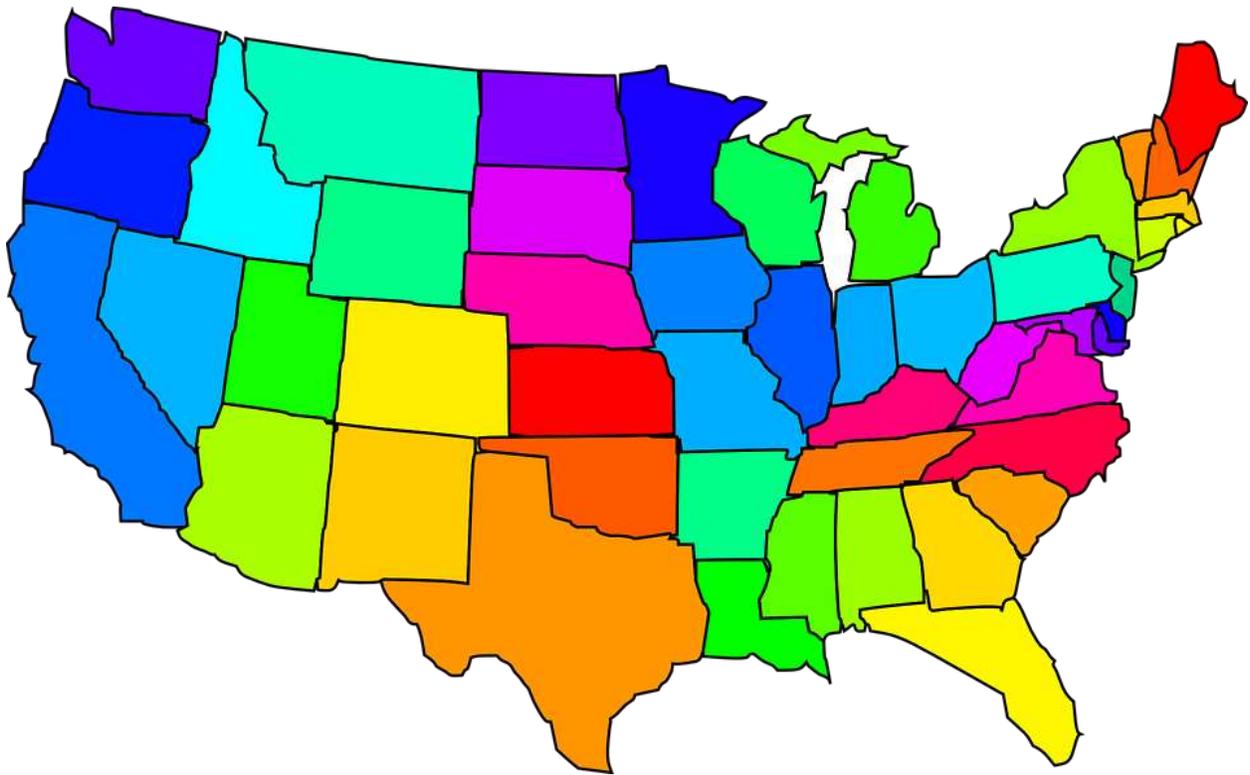


Elementary Social Studies

Mystery Skype

On

United States Geography



Social Studies Mystery Skype/FaceTime

OVERVIEW

Why do a Mystery Skype?

- Creates a global community of learners for students and teachers
- Develops critical thinking skills and problem-solving skills
- Develops geography skills that meet state standards
- Enhances listening and speaking skills
- Develops student leadership skills
- Improves communication and social skills
- Connects schools for this project and future projects
- Can bring in cross-curricular connections

Preparation:

Before the Mystery Skype can take place, the teacher must prepare his/her students by learning about their own location, as well as the potential location of their mystery partner school. These lessons below will guide the teacher through that preparation.

Lesson 1:

The teacher and students will do a read aloud of Joan Sweeney's book "Me on the Map" to introduce students to maps and geography.

Lesson 2:

The teacher will introduce students to cardinal directions (N, S, E, and W). Students will work with the teacher to create a map of their classroom identifying items using those cardinal directions. Teachers may choose to have students make their own maps of their classroom or may choose to complete one together

using a projector or whiteboard. (Detailed instructions for this lesson can be found as Day 1 in the mini-unit “My World”.)

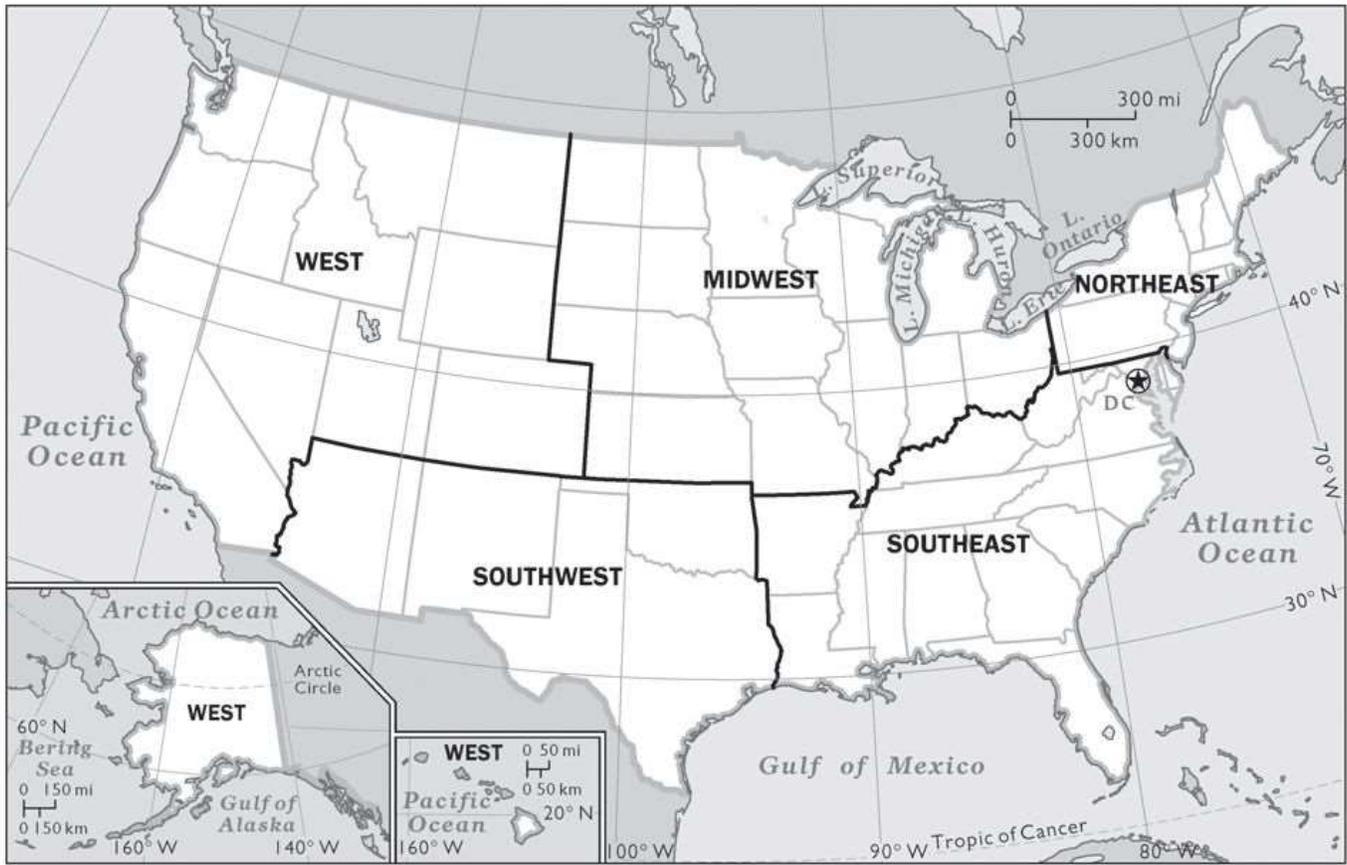
Lesson 3:

The teacher will guide students to understanding the location of their school within the community. Using Google Earth, the teacher will relate their location and connect it to the cardinal directions they have previously been learning. (Detailed instructions for this lesson can be found as Day 3 in the mini-unit “My World”.)

Lesson 4:

The teacher will guide students to understanding the overall map concepts of the United States. Regions of the US can be identified and discussed in this lesson. This awareness of regions will help students to later identify where their mystery partner school is located. Students can shade in the different regions on the map since they will be exploring them more closely at a later time. The map below is available at the following website for teachers to easily print:

<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/maps/united-states-regions/>

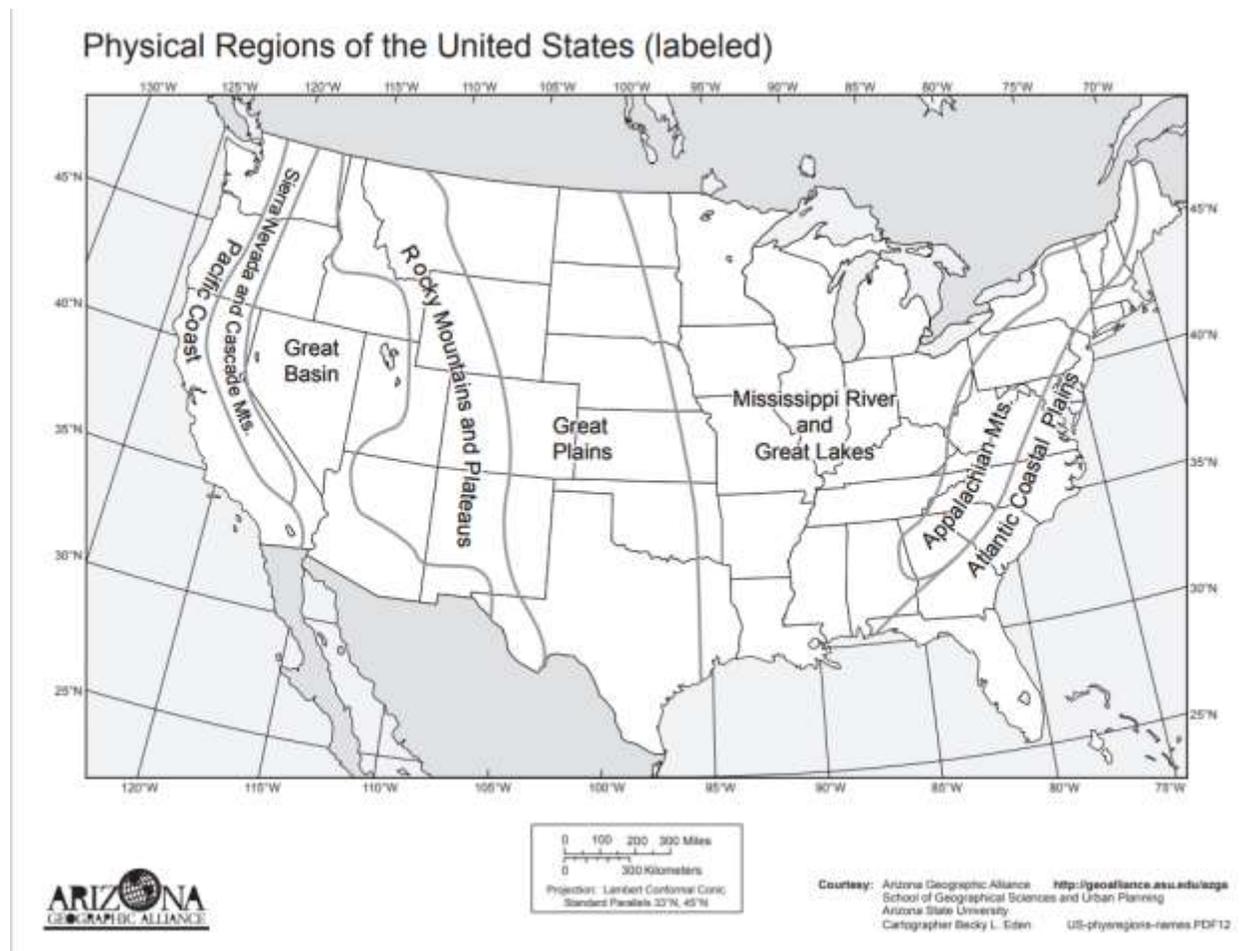


Lesson 5:

The teacher will guide students to identifying the physical regions of the United States and which states fall into each of these regions.

The maps from this website can be helpful in this lesson:

[Maps of the United States and the Southwest United States | Arizona Geographic Alliance \(asu.edu\)](http://www.geographicalliance.asu.edu)



Lesson 6:

Using the map from the previous day, the teacher will guide the students to identifying the bodies of water surrounding the regions of the United States.

Awareness of these bodies of water may be important to discovering the location of their mystery partners, as well as answering questions about their own location in relation to a body of water. Then, the teacher will guide the students to label

the countries of Canada and Mexico, since the partner school may share a border with one of the countries.

Lesson 7:

The teacher will guide students to use the map from Lesson 5 and the map below to discover which states are located within which region of the United States. Older students might even label the states on the map from Lesson 5, if time permits. The map below is available for easy printing on the following website:

http://www.coloringcastle.com/pdfs/us_states/united_states_state_names.pdf



Lesson 8:

The teacher will guide students to identifying major geographical features of the United States, such as mountains, deserts, major rivers, major bodies of water,

etc. Using the map from Lesson 7, students will indicate those geography features and label them appropriately. At a minimum, the teacher should help the students to locate and label the following:

- Rocky Mountains
- Appalachian Mountains
- Great Lakes
- Mississippi River
- Atlantic Ocean
- Pacific Ocean
- Gulf of Mexico

The teacher should use cardinal directions when discussing the geographical features and having the students locate them on the map.

Lesson 9:

The students and teacher will now design questions they feel will best lead them to discover the state where their mystery partner school is located. THIS STEP SEEMS TO BE THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF THIS PROJECT. The teacher will review the rules for questioning the mystery partner school before they develop these questions. (The rules are located at the end of this document.) Since the object of the questioning is to be the first school to figure out where the other school is located, the questions designed should help students to deduce where the partner school is located in the most efficient manner possible. Some sample questions might be as follows:

Is your state east of the Mississippi River?

Does your state border another country?

Is your state land-locked?

Does your state border the Pacific Ocean?

Is there a large mountain range in your state?

Assigning Roles & Responsibilities:

The teacher will need to assign and review student roles for the FaceTime/Skype.

Greeters/Sharers: One to two students will introduce their classrooms and school by name only. (For example, “We are Mrs. Johnson’s first grade class. We attend Smith Elementary”.)

Questioners: Four to five students will actually ask the questions of the partner school. They will practice reading the questions ahead of time. If during the actual Skype meeting the class needs to discuss which question to have the questioners ask, the teacher can utilize the MUTE button while the group discusses their strategy of which question to ask next.

Question Markers: This student or students mark the questions as they are asked so that the questioners don’t accidentally repeat questions.

Map Experts: This student or students put an X on each state on a laminated US map as the group rules it out. The decision as to which states to mark out should be made silently or in whispers.

Photographers: At least two students should take pictures during the meeting of their class participating in the meeting.

Supplies Supervisor: This student monitors and provides additional pencils, dry erase markers, erasers, etc. are needed during the meeting.

Closers: This student or students wrap up by thanking the partner class and may also invite them to join us in the future for other social studies projects later in the year.

Practice Mystery Skype:

The students now should be ready for a practice meeting of the Mystery Skype. The teacher will review the rules with students. If possible, a different staff member (media specialist, librarian, etc.) will pretend to be the teacher from a mystery school. The students will follow the rules to go through a practice session. Afterwards, the teacher can clarify any procedures, etc. that the

students may have had difficulty understanding. Students may also wish to revise the questions they previously wrote after this practice meeting.

Mystery Skype:

The teachers at both partner schools will set up a time/date with the project coordinator to conduct their meeting. They will also determine what type of technology will be utilized during the meeting and will both review the rules of before beginning. Finally, both teachers should look at their own classrooms closely and remove any indicators of their home state (flags, posters, signs, etc.) that might accidentally be viewed during the meeting. On the day of the meeting, the teacher should check the clothing of their students and have any students with shirts on that could indicate their states with team logos, etc. turn those shirts inside out.

Rules for Mystery FaceTime Skype

- The **students** will ask and answer the questions.
- **Students** may only ask questions that can be answered by YES or NO.
- **Students** may only answer questions using YES or NO.
- The **students** at each school will take turns asking questions until one school has successfully identified the state where the other school is located. After one school has made that identification, the questioning session will continue by only the school who has not yet made the identification until the other school's state is also identified.

- After each of the schools have been identified by state, the **teachers or students** will share information about their own school and community with the partner classrooms. After both schools have shared, the **students** can ask questions about what life is like with their partner students, time permitting.