

Grades

3-6

STORYPATH®

Project-Based Learning

A detailed model of a community planning project is shown on a map. The map features a central green area with a blue river or lake winding through it. Surrounding this central area are various colored zones: brown for what appears to be a park or undeveloped land, and green for residential or commercial areas. A network of roads, including a prominent intersection labeled 'Mission Road', is marked with yellow dashed lines. Numerous small, colorful figurines and objects are placed on the map to represent buildings, vehicles, and other community elements. The entire scene is set against a dark background, possibly a table or floor.

Media Literacy in Action: The Community Planning Project

by Margit E. McGuire, PhD

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STORYPATH®

Project-Based Learning

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Photo Credit: Barbara Bromley’s Amber City Planned Community.

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ABOUT STORYPATH

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

THE STORYPATH STRATEGY

The Storypath approach is project-based learning (PBL) at its best. This approach offers both a structure for organizing social studies and literacy curricula and an inquiry instructional strategy for teaching. Each PBL Storypath is designed to place students at the center of the educational endeavor capitalizing on learners' identities and cultural assets to make learning personally meaningful and memorable. The structure for the Storypath project is grounded in the elements of story—setting, characters, and plot or critical incidents that require critical thinking, collaboration, and problem solving while applying an array of literacy skills within the context of the storyline. The strategy is grounded in a belief that students learn best when they have agency (voice, choice, and autonomy) as active participants in their own learning.

Originally developed in Scotland during the 1960s, Storypath draws support from decades of experience with teachers and students in highly diverse settings nationally and internationally. The approach has its roots in these beliefs about students and learning:

- The world is complex and presents many layers of information. Students know a good deal about how the world works and have a reservoir of knowledge that is often untapped in the classroom.
- When students build on that knowledge through activities such as questioning and researching, new understandings are acquired, and literacy skills are meaningfully applied to the process. Because students construct their own knowledge and understanding of their world, their learning is more personally meaningful and memorable.
- Problem solving and creativity are natural and powerful human endeavors. When students are engaged in creative problem solving, they take ownership for their learning.
- The story form integrates content and skills from many disciplines and provides a context for students to gain a deeper, more complex understanding of their world.

AN INQUIRY APPROACH

Compelling questions posed by both teacher and students are a key

component of Storypath. Through the story structure and the discourse, it creates, the teacher fosters students' agency in their search for meaning and understanding as they acquire new knowledge and skills. Your questions, and the discussions they engender, cause students to:

- ask their own questions and think critically about what they know;
- use their prior knowledge to make sense of new information;
- connect personally to important social studies concepts and use literacy skills in context.

The story structure and inquiry guided by unit goals provide the framework for students to integrate skills and complex content through problems they encounter. As they do so, their understanding of important concepts is extended, and key connections are made.

THE STORY STRUCTURE

For thousands of years, stories have helped us create order and make connections between and among events. Storypath's narrative structure helps students understand concepts that they often find difficult to comprehend in the traditional social studies curriculum.

Each PBL Storypath unit centers on a unique and engaging story that provides a concrete context for learning the social studies content. The story may be based on actual historical or everyday events that create a context for students to meaningfully learn content. The story also enables students to simultaneously develop and apply an understanding of key social studies concepts and skills. The story structure of setting, characters, and plot grounds and guides the PBL process.

TYPICAL STRUCTURE OF A STORYPATH UNIT

CREATING THE SETTING

Students create the setting by completing a mural or three-dimensional rendition of the place.

CREATING THE CHARACTERS

Students create characters for the story whose roles they will play during subsequent episodes.

BUILDING CONTEXT

Students are involved in activities such as reading and writing, thereby engaging them more deeply in learning about the people and the place they have created.

CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Characters confront problems typical of those faced by people of that time and place.

CONCLUDING EVENT

Students plan and participate in an activity that brings closure to the story.

Preparing Students for Living in a Democratic Society and Globally Interdependent World

Storypaths are created to develop students' understanding and appreciation for democratic principles. Each unit is designed for students to practice their civic skills in the context of the storyline. Grounded in the inquiry arc of the National Council for the Social Studies C3 Framework, compelling questions guide the learning and prepare students for taking informed action.

At the end of each unit, suggestions are provided to extend the learning beyond the classroom. Practical and doable activities are described that build on the unit's goals, allowing students to engage in taking informed action to foster civic engagement.

MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Everyone is a language learner. Some students are learning more than one language and are at different stages of acquisition. PBL Storypath is highly effective for language learning because learning is contextualized providing purpose and meaning so important to multilingual learners. The learning experience is high level content integrated with authentic language learning. Throughout the Storypath unit, strategies are suggested for supporting the acquisition of language that works well for all learners. As students gain experience in English-speaking classrooms, their abilities and comfort levels increase. At various points in the unit, specific strategies are suggested that can be readily implemented to make the classroom a place for rich language learning—such suggestions are labeled LL (Language Learning).

The Setting

The story structure of setting, characters, and plot fosters sense-making supporting learning and memory while contextualizing language learning. Storypaths begin with the setting whereby the teacher introduces the topic through a compelling question and scenario that taps into students' prior knowledge and experiences while building background knowledge for the unit. Questions thread together rich language descriptions with visuals linking the familiar with the unfamiliar to create a playing field in which all students can contribute. As students brainstorm features for the setting and then construct the setting, language is linked to the physical/kinesthetic creation either in two or three-dimensional objects. This initial art activity affirms that all students have agency in the creation of the setting for the story, thereby fostering engagement and motivation for learning.

Word Banks

Word banks are used throughout the unit to reinforce academic language. Once the setting is established, students contribute to a word bank to reinforce new vocabulary. Word banks can include illustrations/visuals and students' home language, supporting and extending all students' language learning. Opportunities for students to use new academic language in role-plays reinforces and contextualizes new vocabulary as the episodes unfold and form the basis for using the four language domains of speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

The Characters

As students imagine themselves as characters in the story, they are affirmed for their assets as they meld together aspirations and qualities they bring to their created role. Role-play throughout the story supports language learning by rehearsing roles with appropriate supports such as starter sentences and practicing oral language within the context of the story. As teachers have implemented Storypaths in their classrooms, they have noted students' language growth because they are motivated to play the roles they have created and have been affirmed for the assets they have described for their characters. In effect, character development blends together who students are as well as their imagination and creativity. Such learning opportunities foster a sense of belonging as each student has a role in the story.

Building Context

Once the setting and characters are established for the story, students are invested in digging deeper into the knowledge and skills they will need to take the story forward.

Activate prior knowledge. Tap into students' prior knowledge to affirm what they know and can contribute. In some cases, it will be important to pre-teach new vocabulary—introducing concepts with visuals that relate to the subject matter. Storypaths set in the past or in other regions of the world benefit from examples that draw on familiar and present-day experiences. Guiding questions are included to facilitate the instruction.

Allow extra time for small group work. Language learning is enhanced when students have opportunities to work with partners and small groups. These situations allow students more opportunities to contribute to conversations and complete tasks. The Student Portfolio provides guidesheets to scaffold tasks and support language learning.

Model tasks and thought processes. Modeling makes tasks and thinking processes more concrete. For example, if students are expected to write a short poem, model the process of writing a poem. Then have them refer to the model poem as they write their own. Such models are provided at various points in the unit.

Allow use of the home language. For students who possess few English words, encourage them to complete writing activities in their home language. Watch for opportunities for another language to be used in the story. For example, characters working in a store who have another language to communicate with customers can be an asset. Look for opportunities to weave in such student assets to affirm and celebrate language learning. As

students learn more English, they will begin to incorporate English into their written and oral language. This validates the students' home language and their prior knowledge and also recognizes their language assets.

Encourage involvement in class discussions. Language learners may be reluctant to contribute to whole group discussions, so first have them discuss in small groups or with a partner and then encourage them to contribute in a way that is comfortable for them—words, phrases, simple sentences.

Modify assignments and assessments. Students can use many different modes to communicate their understanding of unit concepts. Illustrating, cutting-and-pasting vocabulary activities, using graphic organizers such as timelines, and completing sentence stems are all excellent and valid methods for responding to content. Students can also work on and present material with a partner or in small groups whenever possible.

Critical Incidents

When critical incidents are introduced, students work collaboratively with their peers to problem-solve, imagine, and implement resolutions to the story. These engaging activities highlight how story impacts understanding by linking together learning experiences that otherwise may feel unconnected yet together are so fundamental to the human experience: the power of story. The strategies described above also apply to grappling with critical incidents. Suggestions are included throughout this Teacher's Handbook to support such language learning.

Concluding Event

The concluding event brings closure to the unit and is often an ideal time to include families either in-person or virtually. Recognizing and celebrating language learning as an integral component to the Storypath experience affirms that all students make important contributions, affirming their many assets. Sending an invitation to families in students' home languages is one example that is easy to implement.



The Language Learning icon appears throughout this Teacher's Handbook (TH) to highlight where language learning is integrated into instructional strategies and Student Portfolio activities.

PLANNING THE UNIT

LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

COMPELLING QUESTIONS

What makes a livable and vibrant community for all? How do we analyze and respond to media misinformation?

Teach the big ideas. The topic of livable communities is complex, but here are the big ideas:

- Membership—that feeling that part of us is invested in the community and that we have a right to belong and feel welcome.
- Influence—that sense that we have some say in the community issues that affect us and that our perspectives are appreciated and respected.
- Integration and fulfillment of needs—based on the notion that the community has numerous opportunities for both individual and social fulfillment, including basic needs, recreation, and social interaction. Some scholars have referred to this as meeting the needs of the ‘whole person’ in all our roles, (e.g., goods, services, recreation, desirable social interaction activities).
- Shared emotional connection —based in part on shared history or a sense of community and quality of interactions within the community (What Makes the ‘Good Community’?, Penn State Extension, January 19, 2023)

In this unit the focus will be on the following:

- When communities are organized to bring people together, meeting their needs and wants, communities are healthy and develop a sense of belonging and pride in their community.
- There needs to be a range of housing options to meet community needs (e.g., apartments and houses that are small, medium, and large).
- Businesses are located near each other, creating “one-stop shopping” that meets the needs and wants of the community.
- Schools are located near family homes and close to recreation centers to provide easy access that fosters interaction with community members of all ages and walks of life. Education (and care) for all ages brings people together.
- Transportation needs to be accessible and provide options. Sidewalks are important for community safety and social interaction and for encouraging walking, which helps make a healthier environment.

- Plazas or community gathering places bring people together, developing a sense of belonging and connection to the community.
- Landscaping can make healthier communities. Native trees and plants provide shade, mitigate urban heat, and improve air quality, which can entice people to enjoy the outdoors, which contributes to healthier living.
- Aesthetics enhances the quality of life, promoting a sense of belonging and pride.

MAKE KEY DECISIONS

Decide on a Context for the Livable Community. Depending on your learning goals and setting, decide on the kind of livable community students will design. Consider a town or a space within a larger community. You will want students to design homes, businesses, public services, educational facilities, parks and recreation spaces, landscaping features (e.g., sidewalks, plants, trees), a public gathering place such as a plaza, and aesthetic features. Teaching Master 13, *Media Controversies*, page 14 includes two scenarios for you to choose from or adapt for your specific context. A general layout for the community will facilitate the work and assist with determining the scale for creating the community features. Decide on major roadways, streets, a plaza, green space, parks and recreation, and if you want to include any geographic features such as a lake or river. Also, see Teaching Master 4, *Layout Ideas for the Community*, included as a PDF and in the Content Slide Set Folder.

Make Classroom Space for the Livable Community. You will want to have adequate space for students to make a three-dimensional community model. If space is limited, bulletin board space for a two-dimensional model is another option. Once you have decided on the setting for the model community, decide if the community will be made with small or large boxes (such as milk cartons or gift boxes), blocks, LEGO bricks, modeling clay, or other three-dimensional objects.

Organize Students. It is suggested that students work in groups of two to four as specialists in community planning. The groups will work together throughout much of the unit as they tackle various tasks. Episode 1 describes suggested categories for grouping students: homes, businesses, public services, education, parks and recreation, landscaping (e.g., sidewalks, a plaza, trees and plants), aesthetic features, and transportation.

Effectively Use Role-Plays. Role-plays expand students' understanding and empathy when they have a context in which to take on a role. At different points in the Storypath, students are asked to consider how the community planners might respond to a particular event. Role-plays are effective when the teacher has created a classroom community where students feel safe in expressing ideas and participate to better understand a time and place. Role-plays in this Storypath are developmentally appropriate and designed so that students do not resort to stereotypes but rather seek to understand. The Storypath is asking students "... to undertake an intellectual challenge and a moral imperative: to attempt to imagine into the specific circumstances of a

group of people at a moment in time” (Zinn Education Project).

Prepare for the Controversy. In Episode 4, you will introduce media misinformation about the livable community prototype. You can modify the misinformation to mirror an actual controversy in your community or adapt in any way that is suitable for your situation. Because the students know their own planning process and the results of their planned community, they will have a “lived experience” from which to respond.

Use the Student Portfolio and Teaching Masters to Gather Evidence of Student Learning. The Student Portfolio provides evidence of student understanding of livable communities and media literacy. In the Portfolio students apply reading and writing skills to demonstrate learning. Teaching Masters also can be added to the Portfolio. While much of the students’ work is displayed to enrich the learning environment, you will want to add it to the Portfolio as a record of their performance when the Storypath concludes.

Create a Learning Community. An open and supportive atmosphere is essential for students to engage in the discourse that is basic to the learning process of the Storypath approach. Students should understand the value of reflective discussions and the importance of collaborative work to deepen their understanding of complex ideas. Consequently, students should be expected to listen carefully and respond thoughtfully and respectfully to one another’s ideas.

CUSTOMIZE THE UNIT

Adapt the Unit. There likely will be times in this unit when you will want to modify the curriculum to suit the needs of your own class and follow the logical progression of the story. In Episode 4, you may want to adapt the misinformation in the media to an event in your own community if developmentally appropriate.

Frequently, students will provide an unanticipated twist to the Storypath, or important learning opportunities will arise. The Storypath allows for the accommodation of those special circumstances.

Use Current Events. As noted earlier, there will be times during the unit when students will role-play characters to understand a particular viewpoint. At other times, students will reflect on the events of this unit out of role so that the situations can be examined and understood from the student’s own perspective. These events are opportunities to connect students’ experiences to current events in the news. Problems revolving around land use and allocation of resources are often in the local news, and discussing these problems extends students’ understanding to real communities and ultimately makes the Storypath experience more powerful.

Connect to Other Storypaths. *Community Studies: The Radio Station* Storypath, which is designed to have students learn about their own community by creating radio programs, would serve as an effective complement to this unit. *Understanding Local Government: Democracy in Action* focuses on how local

communities are governed.

INVOLVE OTHERS

Involve Families. Students frequently discuss their Storypath experiences at home. They usually are eager to talk about their planning roles and the community they have created. Invite family members into the classroom in person or virtually to participate in discussions about their community. In Episode 5, students celebrate the community they have created. This is an ideal time to involve families. Students can write invitations to the celebration, and families can participate in the events.

Involve Your Community. A walk through your community could serve as an important extension to the Storypath. Students could interview community members about their views of the community and how their community could be made more livable. Those activities are best conducted at the conclusion of the unit. This allows students to knowledgeably compare and contrast their planned community and their own, which makes a more powerful learning experience.

Involve Community Leaders. At the conclusion of the unit, you may want to invite a member from your community or county council or another community leader to visit your classroom and have students share their “planned community.” The community leaders can make recommendations about actions that can be taken to make their own community more livable. In effect, students could take “informed action” in advocating for a position on an important community issue.

TAKE INFORMED ACTION TO FOSTER CIVIC ENGAGEMENT At the end of the unit, two suggestions are provided to connect students’ learning to real life experiences—one to share with school and families; the other to share in their own community (as noted above). These optional activities engage students in authentic civic engagement and are straight forward and easy to implement.



EPISODE

THE CHARACTERS

THE COMMUNITY PLANNERS

Students discuss livable communities and the role of community planners.

INTRODUCING THE STORYPATH

Materials	Teaching Master 1, <i>Letter of Invitation</i> , p. 3 Content Slide Set 1 Cards and markers for making words for the word bank Optional: Copy photos from slide set to support the word bank for those who benefit from visual cues
Grouping	Whole class
Schedule	Approximately 30 minutes

IMAGINING THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY PLANNER

Students apply for their jobs as community planner specialists.

Materials	Teaching Master 2, <i>Community Planner Application</i> , p. 4 Content Slide Set 1 Optional: Student photos for application Optional: Markers/crayons for drawing on application
Grouping	Each student completes an application
Schedule	Approximately 40 minutes

CONCLUDING EPISODE 1

Students introduce themselves to their classmates in their role as a community planner and then share their learning with families.

Materials	Portfolio 1, <i>Community Planner Introductions</i> , p. 3 Portfolio 2, <i>Active Listening Guide</i> , p. 4 Teaching Master 3, <i>Connecting with Families</i> , p. 5 Chart paper to record family responses
Grouping	Whole class
Schedule	1 hour spread over a few days

EPISODE OBJECTIVES



- **Culture/Geography** Explain the features of a livable community. Describe how community planners interact with the environment to create livable communities.
- **Critical Thinking** Organize ideas from class discussion to create job application.
- **Speaking and Listening** Prepare for and participate effectively with classmates to share and learn about the community planners in the Storypath. Sequence information logically; speak clearly and confidently.
- **Academic Language** Acquire and use a range of academic language related to livable communities.

INTRODUCING THE STORYPATH

Launch the unit

Explain to students that they will be creating a story about livable communities. Review with students the elements of a story: characters (the people in the story), setting (where the story takes place), and plot (events that happen during the story). In this episode, students will be introduced to the concept of livable communities and create their roles as community planners—the characters in the story. Begin the story by reading Teaching Master 1, *Letter of Invitation*, page 3.

Activate prior knowledge about communities

Based on the letter of invitation and to get students thinking about communities, use Content Slide Set 1 to introduce the Storypath. Use Slides 1–4 to start the discussion.

- What is a community?
- What's in your community?
- What do you like best about your community?

Next have students think about the role of a community planner. Share Slides 5–9 to introduce the concept of community planners and livable communities: Community planners know about livable communities—places where people feel safe and enjoy living, working, and raising families.

Explain to students that for this Storypath, they will be in the roles of community planners. Brainstorm ideas for what community planners need to know in order to create livable communities. Slide 9 can start the discussion with students offering specifics for each of the categories. Record their ideas for later reference. Explain that students will apply for jobs to be community planners.

Make a word bank

As the Storypath gets underway, start a word bank that students can reference as the Storypath develops. Highlighting the academic language related to livable communities with words and pictures reinforces for all students concepts related to livable communities. Print photos from the Slide Sets to add to the word bank to support language development.

CREATING THE COMMUNITY PLANNERS

Create the community planners

Distribute Teaching Master 2, *Community Planner Application*, page 4. Discuss each of the qualifications and why each is important for the job. Brainstorm ideas about why a person might want to be a community

AUTHOR NOTE

Management Tip

Before you introduce the Storypath, decide the context for the community students will plan. If you live in an urban setting, will you identify an area for urban renewal? If you live in a farming community, will you identify open spaces where you will plan a new community? Decide what makes the most sense for your learning goals and circumstances.

TEACHING
MASTER

T1



CONTENT
SLIDE SET

1

AUTHOR NOTE

Character Identity

As students imagine themselves as community planners, they affirm their identity and assets as they apply for the job of community planner.

Asking Questions

In essence, your questions are instructive as you lead students to make connections to the various features that need to be coordinated for the community to be created.

planner and why a person might specialize in one area. Guide the discussion so that students understand the importance of working well with others. If appropriate, identify examples of how people work well together, including having such characteristics as listening carefully to others, doing a fair share of the work, being willing to change one's mind about something, compromising, and so forth.

Decide if students will draw themselves on the application or use a photo. Remind students that on a job application, they need to do their best work to increase their chances of being hired for the job.

CONCLUDING EPISODE 1

Meet the community planners

Once students have completed their job applications, determine the groups (specializations) and then announce a meeting to introduce the community planners to each other. Use this as a role-play by rearranging desks or meeting in a different space to help them get into their role.

Have students practice with a partner before they introduce themselves, which will reinforce their speaking and listening skills. Here are some tips to help with their introductions:

1. On your application, underline the most interesting reason for why you want to be a community planner.
2. Start your introduction with your name. Tell your area of specialization.
3. Speak clearly and confidently. Maintain eye contact with your audience.
4. Practice your introduction with your partner, using suggestions for making the introduction even better.

Students can use Portfolio 1, *Community Planner Introductions*, page 3, to help them prepare for the introductions.

Announce the meeting and welcome the planners to their new role and the task ahead. Explain that since this is a new project, the planners will need to meet each other and learn about their areas of specialization.

After each introduction, allow time for students to ask questions of the community planner. To extend students' understanding of the roles of community planners, ask additional questions that help build connections among specialties. For example, you might ask, "Does Vivi like to design

TEACHING
MASTER

T2

CUSTOMIZE

Creating Groups

You may want students to work with partners within a specialization. For example, the "homes" specialization could be organized as: 1) single family dwellings, 2) apartments, or 3) whatever works best for your classroom.

Managing Introductions

The introductions can occur over several days so that interest is maintained and students come to know the various roles needed for community planning.

Make Name Tags

To help students get into role, make name tags with their specializations. This will help them remember the specializations during Storypath time.



Sentence starters can help

language learners organize and practice their introductions. Modeling an introduction is helpful as well.

PORTFOLIO

1

2



homes so families of different generations can live together? Would it be important for homes to be near parks? Will Vivi need to work with Teddy on where to locate the parks in the community?”

As the introductions occur, have students fill in the chart on Portfolio 2, *Active Listening Guide*, page 4. On this page, students write their classmates’ names in the categories in which they will specialize and then draw lines to show how the specialists will have to coordinate with each other to plan the community. Ask questions to help students understand how the various groups will have to work together to plan their community. For example, you can ask such questions as:

- Why do the specialists working on homes have to work with the people planning the business district?
- Why might the people planning for education facilities have to work with the parks and recreation specialists?
- Why is it important for the public services specialists to work with the business specialists?
- How will the transportation specialists work with all the other specialists to plan the community?

Connecting with families

Students can reflect on their first episode by sharing with their family their role as a community planner in the Storypath. Use Teaching Master 3, *Connecting with Families*, page 5, to guide the process.

Students can share the results of their interviews to reinforce community features and the concept of livable communities. A chart of students’ interview responses can serve as a helpful reference point as students begin to plan their prototype.

AUTHOR NOTE

Developing Ownership

As students introduce themselves, listen for information to weave into the Storypath as it develops. One community planner, for example, may be very artistic and might have ideas for artwork for the community. Using information that the students have contributed reinforces both ownership for the Storypath and motivation for learning.

TEACHING
MASTER

T3

2

EPISODE

BUILDING CONTEXT

RESEARCHING LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

INTRODUCING LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

Students discuss the features of livable communities.

Materials Optional: Teaching Master 4, *Layout Ideas for the Community* (Content Slide Set Folder)
Content Slide Sets 2–9 assigned to each group: Aesthetics, Businesses, Education, Homes, Landscaping, Parks and Recreation, Public Services, and Transportation

Grouping Students assigned to groups or partners based on their specialization

Schedule Approximately 40 minutes

RESEARCHING FEATURES OF LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

Students research their specialties to learn about livable communities and then deliberate with their classmates as they share their research.

Materials Slide Sets for each group's specialization:

Teaching Master 5, *Homes for Our Community*, p.6

Teaching Master 6, *Businesses for Our Community*, p.7

Teaching Master 7, *Public Services for Our Community*, p.8

Teaching Master 8, *Education Facilities for Our Community*, p.9

Teaching Master 9, *Parks and Recreation for Our Community*, p.10

Teaching Master 10, *Aesthetic Features for Our Community*, p.11

Teaching Master 11, *Landscaping for Our Community*, p.12

Teaching Master 12, *Transportation for Our Community*, p.13

Portfolio 3, *Deliberation Strategies*, p. 5

Grouping Groups or partners to work on specializations; whole class for discussion

Schedule 1 to 2 hours. The time can be divided over several days

CONCLUDING EPISODE 2

Students reflect on their learning and add to their word banks.

Materials For the word banks: markers and cards

Grouping Whole class to reflect on the experience; individually to contribute words to the word bank

Schedule 30 minutes

EPISODE OBJECTIVES



- **Culture /Geography** Explain the features of a livable community. Describe how the human-built environment interacts with the geographical setting. Demonstrate how the needs and wants of a community influence how communities are organized. Examine the interdependent relationship between people and the environment.
- **Civics** Use deliberation processes when making decisions about livable communities.
- **Critical Thinking** Organize ideas from research and class discussion to create a plan for a livable community.
- **Social Skills** Plan and make decisions to create a livable community.
- **Reading** Read and listen closely to determine what the Content Slides say explicitly and make logical inferences based on evidence. Interpret information presented visually.
- **Speaking and Listening** Prepare for and participate effectively with classmates to share and learn about the community planners in the Storypath. Sequence information logically; speak clearly and confidently.
- **Academic Language** Acquire and use a range of academic language related to livable communities.

INTRODUCING LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

Prepare for the episode

Before you begin this episode, decide on the groups and whether you will divide students within their specializations so they can work with partners rather than in groups. Specializations can be divided by either giving partners a specific location for making their features for the community or dividing the specializations into categories such as schools as one category and other educational facilities as another category, or houses as one category and apartments as another category.

As much as possible, you want the students to do the layout for the planned community. You can do this by giving groups or partners a simple outline of the space, including any geographical features you have decided to include such as a river or lake. They can sketch a layout and discuss as a class, deciding on the best plan or combination of plans. However, this may be too many choices for students, and the process could become bogged down, so it may be better to plot out the main areas of the planned community. See Teaching Master 4, *Layout Ideas for the Community* (Content Slide Set Folder) for possible layouts that you can adapt for your own setting and learning goals.

Introduce the episode

Explain to students that they now will begin to research their topics so they can create a livable community. Review with students the results of the family interviews to guide students' thinking about livable communities. Distribute the Content Slide Sets 2–9 (Homes, Businesses, Public Services, Education, Parks and Recreation, Landscaping, Aesthetic Features, Transportation) for each specialization to the appropriate groups. Explain that they will need to become experts in their specialization.

Build background knowledge on communities

The first three slides for each of the specializations are the same. Read altogether, in groups or in pairs. After reading the first three slides, engage students in a discussion about the planned community and record their responses for reference as the planning occurs throughout the episode. You might use questions such as the following to begin the discussion:

- ❓ How will the geographic features influence our plans? (*Guide the discussion so that students make connections between the needs and wants of community members and how the environment will influence those needs and wants.*)
- ❓ Why is it important for people to enjoy their community? (*When people like where they live, they are happier and take advantage of what their community has to offer.*)
- ❓ How do public services such as firefighters and police officers keep our

TEACHING
MASTER

T4



CONTENT
SLIDE SETS

2-9

LANGUAGE LEARNING



The Content Slide Sets provide visuals that put the Storypath concepts in context.

CUSTOMIZE

Other Specializations

There may be other categories you want to include such as places of worship or cemeteries, concert venues, or other meaningful topics for your own setting.

AUTHOR NOTE

Classroom Discourse

The learning process is grounded in classroom discourse as students discuss and share ideas about the design of their livable community.

communities safe? Why are they important to communities? *(Students likely will have examples to share from their own experiences.)*

- ❓ What other public services keep us healthy and safe? *(Students most likely will not think of the post office, water, electricity, or waste disposal as public services so ask probing questions to help them make those connections.)*
- ❓ How do transportation choices make our community livable? *(Help students understand that depending on the community, public transportation along with other modes of transportation are very important to communities. Encourage students to share their experiences with different modes of transportation.)*
- ❓ Why is education important to our community? *(Students should be able to identify their local schools. Guide them to identify other kinds of education facilities typically found in communities such as preschools and tutoring or language schools.)*
- ❓ Why are parks important to communities? *(Gathering places for people to play and enjoy the outdoors is important. Students can draw from their own experiences to personalize their learning.)*
- ❓ How do green spaces and nature make a community more livable? *(Opportunities for people to enjoy the outdoors—come together, exercise, play, and enjoy the environment—contribute to healthier and happier people. The environment is also healthier with shade, cleaner air, and so forth.)*
- ❓ Why is art important to communities? *(Prompt students to identify art in their own community as a reference point. Art brings people together and can educate people about culture and history. Art can evoke such emotions as laughter, wondering, and awe.)*

Optional question if you are going to include a plaza:

- ❓ How can a plaza at the center of our community make our community more livable? *(Plazas are gathering places that often have easily accessible businesses and public services surrounding the plaza. Plazas can be a place for special events such as holiday celebrations, farmers' markets, concerts, and children's activities.)*

RESEARCHING FEATURES OF LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

Research and share information about the specializations

Distribute Teaching Masters T5–T12 for each specialization to the appropriate groups and have them begin their research. As students engage in their research, interject community planning meetings so students can share their ideas. Early on, students should realize that even though they are specializing, they need to work with the other groups/partners so the

GEOGRAPHIC THINKING

Examine the interdependent relationship between the people and the environment.

CUSTOMIZE

AI

Students can locate additional information about livable communities by writing questions related to their specializations, such as “What is the best kind of transportation for a livable community?” Discuss the sources of information from their AI searches to prepare for Episode 4’s critical incident.

AUTHOR NOTE

Planning ahead

Early meetings in the planning process will make it easier for the “give and take” necessary for the planning process. Waiting too long when students are deeply invested in their own idea will make it more difficult for students to compromise.

TEACHING
MASTERS

T5-12

community comes together.

Anticipate that students will have ideas that will conflict with other groups, so explain that there will need to be many planning meetings so they can share their ideas. Refer students to Portfolio 3, *Deliberation Strategies*, page 5, to use as a guide for productive discussions. Provide examples from students' discussions to model the deliberation strategies.

CONCLUDING EPISODE 2

Reflect on their research

To reinforce their learning, initiate a discussion about the research on the specializations. Remind students that as community planners, they will need to continue to share their research to help everyone understand all the aspects that help make a livable community. Because the research reflects collective work, this is a good opportunity to reinforce the social interaction and cooperative learning that took place to create the plan for each specialization. Use questions such as these:

- ❓ In what ways might the people in the community be affected by the natural environment and landscaping? *(Reinforce for students how the environment affects livable communities. They should understand that the natural environment supports healthier lifestyles as people spend more time outdoors and benefit from cleaner air and shade that trees and plants in the community provide.)*
- ❓ Why is it important for businesses and public services to be located near each other? *(When goods and services are conveniently located near each other, people can efficiently access them. That reduces transportation time and helps make a more vibrant community.)*
- ❓ How has your transportation design made your community more livable? *(People can easily get from place to place. Sidewalks encourage people to walk, and walking is good for one's health. Bikeways and pathways also increase exercise. If public transportation is included, that allows people from all walks of life to get from place to place.)*
- ❓ Why are art and public spaces important to communities? *(People develop a sense of belonging to a place when they can enjoy art and outdoor spaces. Outdoor spaces also allow for special events and community traditions to be established and maintained thus making communities more livable.)*
- ❓ How is this community similar to and different from the community in which you live? *(Create a chart to compare and contrast the two.)*
- ❓ What was challenging in creating the plan for the specializations?
Would you like to live in this community? Why?

PORTFOLIO

3



CUSTOMIZE

Families

Students can share their guidesheets with families to get their ideas about their specialization.

LITERACY



Academic Language

Add to the word bank. Optional activities can include making sketches or writing phrases to reinforce language learning.

3

EPISODE

BUILDING CONTEXT

CONSTRUCTING THE COMMUNITY

INTRODUCING THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE COMMUNITY

Students learn about the community construction process.

Materials	Portfolio 3, <i>Deliberation Strategies</i> , p. 5
Grouping	Whole class
Schedule	Approximately 20 minutes

CONSTRUCTING THE COMMUNITY

Students create their three-dimensional section.

Materials	Large sheet of paper for drawing the layout of the community, including outlines of major sections such as geographic features (e.g., rivers and lakes), business district, homes, parks, and roads. Make an outline and cut out the sections so that students can work at tables with their specializations (homes, business district, parks and recreation areas—the sections that are “self-contained”). Three-dimensional materials such as boxes, blocks, LEGO bricks, modeling clay (for buildings—select the most appropriate) Construction paper, tissue paper, popsicle sticks, other craft materials such as pebbles, pipe cleaners, straws, yarn, string, ribbon Crayons, colored markers, glue, ruler, scissors
Grouping	Specialization groups established earlier
Schedule	Approximately 2 hours

CONCLUDING EPISODE 3

Students reflect on their experience and write postcards to their family.

Materials	Portfolio 4, <i>Postcard of the Livable Community</i> , p. 6 Photo of the livable community as a postcard; one for each student
Grouping	Whole class for discussion; individuals for writing postcard
Schedule	Approximately 30 minutes

EPISODE OBJECTIVES



- **Culture/Geography** Explain the features of a livable community. Describe how the human-built environment interacts with the geographical setting. Demonstrate how the needs and wants of a community influence how communities are organized. Examine the interdependent relationship between people and the environment.
- **Civics** Use deliberation processes when making decisions about livable communities.
- **Critical Thinking** Organize ideas from research and class discussion to implement the plan for a livable community.
- **Writing** Write postcards to describe the livable community using vivid details and well-structured event sequences.
- **Speaking and Listening** Participate effectively in conversations and collaborations to learn about livable communities. Sequence information logically; speak clearly and confidently.

INTRODUCING THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE COMMUNITY

Based on your plan for the three-dimensional construction of the community, assemble the needed materials and determine workspaces for each specialization.

To organize the task, it may be easier to have sections (homes, businesses/public services, parks and recreation groups) work at separate tables and then place their section on the “comprehensive plan.” The transportation group (and plaza group if a plaza has been included) should work on the comprehensive plan. Based on skill levels, you will need to assist with proportion and scale. Providing students with general size dimensions for homes and businesses will move the process along. When working with the transportation group, streets, sidewalks, and bike paths (if being included) can be outlined on the comprehensive plan and students then can add public transportation stops, bridges if needed, designations for bike paths, crosswalks, and so forth. Such decision making can raise questions about locations for such things as public transportation stops, crosswalks, and stoplights depending on how much detail you want students to consider. Artwork and landscaping features (e.g., trees and plants) can be done at desks, with reminders about proportion and scale.

Assemble the materials needed and determine workspaces for each specialization.

Introduce the construction process

Explain to students that the community planners will begin construction of their community, and the first step is a meeting of the community planners to think about how they will work together. Proactively, have students suggest problem solving and cooperative learning strategies that they will need to use to begin the work—refer back to the previous episode. Create with them a plan for working together in the construction process. Below are suggested questions to get the process underway. Record their answers to refer back to as they build their community.

- ❓ Why will it be important to work collaboratively? *(Students should be able to explain that the different aspects of the community must come together in order to have a livable community, and that requires working collaboratively. They should be able to identify, for example, the reasoning for why schools should be near homes, or businesses and public services should be near each other.)*
- ❓ What does it mean to work collaboratively? *(Guide the discussion so that students understand that they have a common goal as community planners—to create a livable community. This means they share ideas, expertise, and resources. Use Portfolio 3, Deliberation Strategies, page 5, practiced in Episode 2, to help the process go more smoothly.)*

CONNECT

Mathematics

Before the groups begin work, discuss proportion and scale. Provide a model for the size of a particular business or home and have students think about the relative sizes of other buildings that might be on the same street. (A grocery store, for example, might be larger than a bakery.)

PORTFOLIO

3



- ❓ What will you do if you have a disagreement? *(Students should be able to identify words or phrases they could use to talk about the disagreement. Guide the discussion so they think about reaching a compromise, with each side giving a little to reach an agreement.)*

Role-play examples of how to compromise. For example, you could explain that one person wants evergreen trees for shade while another wants deciduous trees such as maple or oak. Or one group wants bike lanes, but another group thinks it is too expensive. Another example could be where to place community art.

CONSTRUCTING THE COMMUNITY

Begin the construction of the livable community

Organize the groups/partners, distribute the materials, and have students begin work. At various times, it may be necessary for planning meetings to resolve problems. As much as possible, have students work through the problems themselves. Coach them as necessary.

If some groups finish early, have them assist other groups with tasks that require more detail (e.g., making trees and plants, trash and recycling bins, street signs such as crosswalk and stop signs). This will help manage the time as students complete the various tasks for the planned community.

CONCLUDING EPISODE 3

Examine the livable community

Have students look at their community and think about how they have created a sense of belonging and encouraged healthy living. Have students identify the features in their community that contribute to these two important understandings. Students may decide that they want to add more features to their setting, such as front porches to houses, hiking trails, or more parks. Depending on time, have students add these features.

Discuss students' experiences

To bring closure to this episode, discuss the following summary questions:

- ❓ What was challenging in building our community?
- ❓ How did the natural environment affect the design of the community?
- ❓ How does this community create a sense of belonging?
- ❓ Why would people want to live in this community?

Write a postcard

To assess student learning about the livable community and continue to

AUTHOR NOTE

Plan ahead

See the Teaching Master 12, *Media Controversies*, to determine if you want to prompt the park group to add children's play equipment to their park.

CONNECT

Community names

At this point, students may ask about a name for the community. This is a good time to discuss how communities get their names. Using examples from your own region and beyond, discuss and investigate how communities' names were determined.

Map-making

Student learning can be extended by having students make maps of their created community. This may also raise questions about street and place names—another extension of this learning experience.

PORTFOLIO

4



CUSTOMIZE

Sharing the livable community

Electronic sharing of the livable community is another option.

<p>inform family members about the unit, have students create a postcard to take home. Take a photo of the livable community for the postcard. Distribute a copy of Portfolio 4, <i>Postcard of the Livable Community</i>, page 6, to each student. Students will use this guidesheet to help them organize their postcard. As students reflect on their livable community, brainstorm descriptive words and add these to the word bank (words that create vivid pictures and tap into the readers' senses). On the reverse side, have students write a postcard to their families describing their livable community. Encourage them to use words from the word bank.</p>	
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4

EPISODE

EPISODE OBJECTIVES



CRITICAL INCIDENT A MEDIA CONTROVERSY

INTRODUCING THE CRITICAL INCIDENT

Students listen to and discuss the media report.

Materials Teaching Master 13, *Media Controversies*, p. 14
Portfolio 5, *Guide to Analyzing the News Report*, p. 7

Grouping Whole class

Schedule Approximately 30 minutes

RESPONDING TO THE NEWS REPORT

Students decide how they will respond. Students then create a response.

Materials Teaching Master 14, *Letter Writing*, p. 15
Teaching Master 15, *Media Announcement*, p. 16
Teaching Master 16, *Poster or Flyer*, p. 17
Optional: Art materials such as poster board, construction paper, markers
Optional: Media technology for their response

Grouping Whole class for discussion; individuals, partners, or small groups to create responses

Schedule Approximately 1 hour

CONCLUDING EPISODE 4

Students share their responses with the class and reflect on their experience.

Materials Materials developed in response to the media misinformation.

Grouping Students report on their projects with their groups. Whole class reflects on their experience.

Schedule Approximately 1 hour

- **Culture /Geography** Explain the features of a livable community. Describe how the human-built environment interacts with the geographic setting. Demonstrate how the needs and wants of a community influence how communities are organized. Examine the interdependent relationship between people and the environment.
- **Civics** Use deliberation processes when making decisions about livable communities and misinformation. Identify the rights of people to express opinions and share information about community issues. Recognize and evaluate the impact of civic actions that influence the public.
- **Critical Thinking** Appraise ideas and consider points of view in making judgments about the media controversy. Examine credible sources of information on an issue.
- **Reading** Analyze text to comprehend misinformation in the media.
- **Speaking and Listening** Participate effectively in conversations and collaborations to discuss media misinformation.
- **Writing** Present information, findings, and supporting evidence using reasoning, organization, and voice. Use of digital media and/or visual displays understanding of research.
- **Academic Language** Acquire and use a range of academic language related to livable communities.

INTRODUCING THE CRITICAL INCIDENT

Select a media controversy

Decide on a media controversy that is developmentally suitable for your students and is logical in terms of the previous episodes and the creation of the livable community. See Teaching Master 13, *Media Controversies*, page 14, to use or adapt for your situation. Be mindful of how particular students might respond to the misinformation. Consider who can best handle the media report related to the specialization/situation that is misrepresented—adapt as necessary.

News alert

Introduce the critical incident by reading one of the controversies (or an adaptation) from Teaching Master 13, *Media Controversies*, page 14. Discuss any difficult academic language that appears in the media report.

Then use the following questions to prompt discussion about the article:

- ❓ What is the news report about?
- ❓ Do you think that this news report is biased? (*Bias can be defined as thinking about something without having all the information or having already decided something without having a good reason.*) Why? (*The news report is biased because the reporter does not have the facts.*)
- ❓ Why is it important for reporters to know their facts? (*Students should be able to explain the importance of researching information for the news story and to represent information fairly.*)
- ❓ Will certain people be harmed by this news report? (*Help students understand that when misinformation is presented, some people can believe that information and make decisions based on misinformation. In this case, people may decide that the community is not “livable.”*)
- ❓ How does this news report make you feel? (*Students should have strong feelings about the misinformation because they have invested in the project and are proud of the work—labeling emotions can be helpful for taking action about the misinformation.*)
- ❓ Did the author of the news report use words that were not accurate? (*Students should question the reporter’s statement that there are “hundreds of people” or “everyone.” They should also be able to identify other inaccuracies.*)
- ❓ Is this a trustworthy reporter? Why or why not? (*Identify the misinformation and that the reporter clearly had not done the necessary investigation to write a news report about the livable community.*)

After students have read and discussed the news report, guide the discussion

TEACHING
MASTER

T13

AUTHOR NOTE

The media controversy

This critical incident was chosen to make misinformation in the media personally meaningful to the students. When students have the “lived experience of planning the livable community,” and then find out that their work has been misrepresented, it is hoped that seeds are sown for them to be critical consumers of future media they encounter.

CUSTOMIZE

Role-play

Another adult could take the role of the reporter to share the news or use media technology to share the information.

LITERACY

Academic Language

Biased: Being for or against something without impartial reasoning.

Trustworthy: Worthy of trust because of being honest and truthful.

Inaccuracies: Mistakes or errors

Counteracting: To stop something from having an effect.

Refute: To prove something is wrong or untrue.

so that students will want to respond to the media report: “Set the record straight!”

To reinforce the discussion on the media report, have students complete Portfolio 5, *Guide to Analyzing the News Report*, page 7.

RESPONDING TO THE NEWS REPORT

Discuss how to respond

As a class, discuss the following questions:

- ❓ How should we respond to the news report? (Record students’ ideas as you guide the discussion so that they identify ideas such as writing a response to the reporter, writing their own news report, making signs and fliers, and other strategies for counteracting the misinformation.)
- ❓ What should our response be? (Display the media report and have students identify the misinformation and then consider the correct information.) Record students’ responses as you guide the discussion (or offer suggestions) so that students have a set of guidelines for responding to media misinformation.

State the misinformation and then provide the correct information. For example, the statement “the park does not have play equipment for children” should be refuted by providing evidence such as pictures that refute the misinformation.

Discuss why the community planners are trusted sources of information—they researched and created the livable community.

Develop a plan for refuting the misinformation with multiple ways of responding (e.g., letters, speeches, special events, media broadcasts).

Create a plan

Explain that now the community planners will need to create a plan to respond to the misinformation. Based on the discussion, students can complete the kinds of activities listed below. Select the ones that best meet the needs of your students. Allowing students to decide how they will respond fosters ownership for the process and demonstrates that there are multiple ways to respond to misinformation:

- A letter to the news reporter
- A news article or a letter to the editor written by the community planners
- A media response such as a radio interview, video recording, podcast, or other forms of social media
- Posters/flyers
- Special event
- Holding a meeting or rally to set the record straight.

POLITICAL THINKING

Critical Thinking

Through the lived experience of a media controversy, students apply their learning by evaluating the information and taking action to respond to the misinformation.

Prepare responses

Based on the decision about how to respond, use the appropriate Teaching Masters 14–16. Decide if students will complete these individually, with a partner, or in small groups. Use the Teaching Masters as an instructional tool. All the Teaching Masters begin with students identifying the misinformation (make a list) and then listing the correct information. This could be done as a whole class activity to get the process underway.

A photo of the community area that is misrepresented can be discussed, with students deciding what should be photographed in order to correct the misinformation. Students can brainstorm captions for the photo.

The writing trait of “voice” is suggested for the responses, using strong words that express feelings about the topic with an awareness of the audience. Brainstorm words that can help students craft their responses with a strong voice. Add the words to the word bank.

CONCLUDING EPISODE 4

Share responses

Allow time for students to share what they have created (e.g., their letters, articles, posters, fliers) with the class. After students have had a chance to see other students’ responses and ask any questions they may have about them, discuss students’ reactions. Use questions such as these to get the discussion started:

- ❓ Why do you think it is important to respond to misinformation about the livable community?
- ❓ Why is it important for media to present accurate information?
- ❓ Do you think people are harmed when there is misinformation in the media and elsewhere?
- ❓ Why were you the best people to do this?
- ❓ Why is it important to question information in the media?
- ❓ Why is it important to check facts when you read something?
- ❓ Why is it important to know who the author is?

ASSESS: The media response

- Uses writing and/or pictures to identify the misinformation and to provide the correct information; effectively uses “voice” to express feelings about the misinformation.
- Was done with care.

TEACHING
MASTERS

T14-16

LITERACY



Language learners
can benefit from

explicit instruction on transitions for making arguments. For creating their responses to the controversy, demonstrate how words like “however” and “on the other hand” can be used to frame their position. Explain how a reason and its evidence support a position related to the controversy.

Language learners can write in their home language as others in their community may speak the same language. Posters/ fliers are another option where students can write less and use visuals.

5

EPISODE

EPISODE OBJECTIVES



CONCLUDING EVENT

CELEBRATING THE LIVABLE COMMUNITY

DISCUSSING CELEBRATIONS

Students discuss how and why communities celebrate and then write an invitation.

Materials Teaching Master 17, *Invitation*, p. 18

Grouping Whole class

Schedule Approximately 30 minutes

PLANNING AND HOLDING THE CELEBRATION

Students plan and present their livable community project.

Materials Assemble the necessary materials depending on the type of celebration that students plan.

Grouping Students work in specialization groups to plan their presentation.

Schedule Will vary depending on the celebration that is planned.

CONCLUDING EPISODE 5

Students reflect on their experiences.

Materials None

Grouping Whole class

Schedule Approximately 30 minutes

- **Culture /Geography** Explain the features of a livable community. Describe how the human-built environment interacts with the geographical setting. Demonstrate how the needs and wants of a community influence how communities are organized. Examine the interdependent relationship between people and the environment.
- **Civics** Use deliberation processes when making decisions about livable communities and misinformation. Identify the rights of people to express opinions and share information about community issues. Recognize and evaluate the impact of civic actions that influence the public.
- **Critical Thinking** *Appraise ideas and consider points of view in making judgments about the media controversy. Examine credible sources of information on an issue.*
- **Reading** Analyze text to comprehend misinformation in the media.
- **Speaking and Listening** Participate effectively in conversations and collaborations to discuss media misinformation.
- **Writing** Present information, findings, and supporting evidence using reasoning, organization, and voice. Use of digital media and/or visual displays understanding of research.
- **Academic Language** Acquire and use a range of academic language related to livable communities.

DISCUSSING CELEBRATIONS

Launch the episode

Begin this episode by asking students, “Why do communities celebrate? How do communities celebrate?” Students should be able to identify their local community celebrations. Explain that livable communities have celebrations to create a sense of belonging and pride in their community and to honor local, state, and national events.

Brainstorm with students the kinds of celebrations their livable community might have. If it is feasible, and depending on the time of year, the celebration can be one that students imagine for their livable community.

If time limitations are a factor, plan for a celebration that invites families to see the livable community—in person or virtually. Then explain that the community planners will celebrate the completion of the livable community and share what they have learned with families, and possibly other classes and community members.

Based on your situation, have students write an invitation to their livable community celebration. Teaching Master 17, *Invitation*, page 18, provides a template for each student to complete to share with their family and others based on your plans.

PLANNING AND HOLDING THE CELEBRATION

Plan the celebration

Once students have chosen the celebration activity, arrange them in their specialization groups to plan what they will share. Ideally, each student should share something about their livable community.

To reinforce the learning, have students share one aspect of their livable community and explain why it meets the criteria for livable communities.

Hold the celebration

Students share their livable community. Plan for attendees to ask questions about the livable community and the planning process. They might also ask about the media controversy.

CONCLUDING EPISODE 5

Reflect on the experience

After the celebration, have students create a list of what they learned in this unit.

Begin the reflection by asking:

CUSTOMIZE

Time Management

Adapt based on your time limitations. The conclusion can be as simple as a reflective discussion.

CONNECT

Invite Community Members

This project should be of interest to city council members and other community people. This is an ideal time to share student work with the media as well. Invite them!

TEACHING
MASTER

T17

❓ What makes a livable and vibrant community for all?

❓ How do we analyze and respond to media misinformation?

Guide the discussion so that the following generalizations are reinforced:

When communities are organized to bring people together, meeting their needs and wants, communities are healthy because they develop a sense of belonging and pride in their community.

There needs to be a range of housing options to meet community needs (e.g., apartments and houses in a full range of sizes).

Businesses are located near each other to facilitate “one-stop shopping,” meeting the needs and wants of the community.

Schools are located near family homes and recreation centers to foster interaction with community members of all ages and walks of life. Education (and care) for all ages brings people together.

Transportation needs to be accessible and provide options. Sidewalks are important for community safety, social interaction, and to encourage walking, all of which help make a healthier environment.

Plazas or community gathering places bring people together, which develops a sense of belonging and connection to the community.

Landscaping can make healthier communities when there are native trees and plants because they provide shade, mitigate urban heat, improve air quality, and entice people to enjoy the outdoors, all of which leads to increased healthier living.

Aesthetics enhances the quality of life, promoting a sense of belonging and pride.

Extend the learning to foster civic engagement

To reinforce and apply learning, two practical and doable activities that foster civic engagement are suggested. You will find these at the end of this handbook.



TAKE INFORMED ACTION TO FOSTER CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Students benefit when they apply their social studies learning beyond the classroom, especially when they can authentically take informed action by embracing the role as active participants in the democratic process.

These are the building blocks essential to a thriving democratic society. For this Storypath, two suggestions are described.

SCHOOL AND FAMILIES

Students can share with other classrooms the importance of being critical consumers of media using their Storypath experience as an example. A collaborative activity such as a sign that suggests ways to be critical consumers of information could be posted on a bulletin board in the school or shared with families.

THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Based on your own community, students can identify an aspect they think could make their community more livable. They then should identify the entity that can address the issue. (Check with families to be sure they are on board.)

Possibilities could be:

- Eliminating litter or graffiti in the community
- Increasing green spaces and planting trees to create a more sustainable environment
- Adding sidewalks and improving other sidewalks for accessibility by all pedestrians.
- Making unsafe traffic areas safe by adding crosswalks, traffic lights, and additional signage where needed.
- Adding artwork to a public space

Once something is identified, students can write a proposal or arrange a conversation with the appropriate person/government agency, identifying the problem and offering a solution. Such civic action allows students to personally engage in an authentic community problem.

LITERACY

Academic Language

Before students attend a community meeting, you might have them work on a class “dictionary” of terms that pertain to formal meetings. For example, students might not know the meanings of words like motion, second the motion, table the motion, out of order, abstention, call the question, and so on.

EXTENDING STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCES

Land use issues are often discussed at community meetings. Especially for older students, this would be an opportunity for them to observe and perhaps testify on a land use issue in their own community.

Materials Paper and pencil
Permission slips

Grouping Whole class

Schedule Approximately 3 hours

Arrange for students to attend a community meeting. Types of meetings that may be held in your community include:

- planning commission meetings
- advisory board meetings
- city council meetings
- town meetings

If it is not practical for your students to attend a meeting, news coverage of community meetings can provide opportunities for students to observe “snapshots” of proceedings.

After students attend or view a community meeting, discuss the experience with them. Use questions like the following to prompt students’ thinking:

- What was the purpose of the meeting?
- Was it a meeting that is held regularly or one that was for a special purpose?
- How were decisions made at the meeting?
- What role did community members play at the meeting?
- What officials were present at the meeting?
How did they respond to community members?
- Were issues raised about accuracy (misinformation) about the issue?
- Was the meeting what you expected? In what ways?
- How was the meeting similar to and different from what you experienced in the classroom?

APPLICATION OF THE C3 FRAMEWORK

Dimension 1: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries Within the context of the inquiry approach to PBL Storypath, Livable Communities’ compelling questions are: What makes a livable and vibrant community for all? How do we analyze and respond to media misinformation?

These questions launch the unit as students begin to investigate how communities are organized to meet the needs and wants of its members. In Episode 1, students imagine themselves in the role of community planners as they begin to learn about how community planners think about making communities more livable for everyone.

Dimension 2: Connections to Disciplinary Tools and Concepts &

Dimension 3: Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence

In Episode 2, students investigate features of livable communities as they consider how environmental and cultural characteristics influence communities and how communities provide for the needs and wants of the people in communities. Episode 3 involves creating a prototype of a livable community based on the sources they investigated. Integral to this learning is the give and take necessary in creating a livable community. Many community planning meetings occur as students practice deliberative processes when making decisions about features of their livable community.

A controversy occurs in Episode 4 when the community planners learn about a news report that misrepresents aspects of their livable community. Students analyze the misinformation and the best response to the misinformation. This controversy highlights the importance of being critical consumers of information and taking a stand to correct the misinformation.

Dimension 4: Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action As students responded to the controversy in Episode 4, they were communicating conclusions and taking informed action about livable communities and the importance of media literacy. The unit concludes with a celebration in which students share their prototype with others. Students then have the opportunity to apply their learning to consider problems in their own community, taking their learning beyond the schoolhouse door. Thus, students identify a problem in their own school or community and then take informed action to address the problem, identifying the concern and suggesting how the concern can be addressed to make their own community more “livable.”

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Websites

Search “Creating Equitable, Healthy, and Sustainable Communities” for background information on local communities across the nation working to create healthier communities.

Institute for Sustainable Communities

<https://sustain.org/cities/>

This resource provides helpful background information on issues of sustainability and communities.

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) Position Statement on Media Literacy

NCSS provides a helpful guide and a list of teacher resources to teach media literacy.

<https://www.socialstudies.org/position-statements/media-literacy>

PBS Learning Media

<https://kcts9.pbslearningmedia.org>

Social Studies page includes short videos about community controversies and environmental issues.

There are also resources on media. Search “**Common Sense Media.**”

This nonprofit organization provides reviews and ratings for movies, TV shows, books, games, and apps, with a focus on families so they can make informed choices about media and technology for their children. The site also includes resources and tools for educators to integrate technology into their classrooms and develop digital citizenship.

<https://www.common sense media.org>

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

For more information about community issues:

Community Action Network www.caction.org

Goal: Collect and distribute information on practical solutions to social problems.

Community Development Society www.cdsociety.org

Goal: Promote the exchange of ideas and experiences about community development.

National Association of Neighborhoods www.nanworld.org

Goal: Promote better neighborhoods; help neighborhood leaders secure a political voice.

National Crime Prevention Council www.ncpc.org

Goal: Educate the public and enable people to prevent crime and build safer communities.

National Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) www.pta.org

Goal: Unite the forces of home, school, and the community; work for legislation benefitting children and youth.

