“Time, Place, and Play.” It’s a short phrase, but it summarizes three very big concepts—history, geography, and culture—that are part of the elementary social studies curriculum. Twenty-five elementary and middle school teachers, meeting over several weeks in a university class, designed a unit of study on the topic of Time, Place, and Play. The unit could be adapted for grades four through eight grades and could be taught over two weeks (ten one-hour class periods).

The teachers crafted a blueprint to guide their unit by isolating the purposes for learning associated with time, place, and play; and constructing web or concept map to record some strategies for integrating curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

The Purpose of the Unit of Study
The teachers identified the following purposes for their unit:

a. explore the vocabulary, definitions, and characteristics associated with each of the three concepts of time (history), place (geography), and play (social interaction) as the guiding objectives of the unit of study;

b. investigate, using quality nonfiction books and websites for children, the relationships between time, place, and play as observed in today’s world; and

c. create various forms of self-expression or outcomes to demonstrate this new learning. Their work could be shared with peers and family members.

Once the unit’s purposes were established, teachers eagerly began organizing their integrated curriculum, instruction, and assessment using a pedagogical web chart. The spokes on the web were labeled with the curricular areas of literacy, math, science, social studies, and fine arts. The sources from which information might be gathered, such as the Internet, library, and the wider community, were also included. For two class sessions, teachers contributed innovative strategies and essential tools, three of which were selected for inclusion in the lesson plan.

Activities and Outcomes
In the lesson plans below, the first two activities are essential. Then teachers can choose to do one or more of the follow-up activities listed under III-V as small group projects and as individual assessment. Class periods are assumed to be one hour in length.
I. Pieces and Places (one period)
The class will brainstorm various forms of play (recreation, games, and sports) as follows. Divide the class into teams of five students each (cooperative learning groups) and ask them to list forms of play from the past and present, from around the world—forms of play that they have done, or seen on television, or read about. The play can be a sport, a children’s game, or any sort of enjoyable pastime. Then, each team offers the teacher, who is at the front of the room, an item from their list. If no other team has identified this form of play, that team is awarded a point. Ultimately, one team will be declared the winner.

Using the list generated by this activity, the teacher can create a shorter list of possible research topics (forms of play). She may add items to the list, such as games she knows could be interesting to learn about, or exclude items that she can foresee would not work well in the following activities (Figure 1). The teacher distributes this list to all students and invites discussion. The list itself may elicit interesting classroom conversations, offering the teacher opportunities to discuss aspects of the concept of play (its vocabulary, definitions, characteristics, relationships, etc.). As new class discussions arise, young learners can be engaged in additional rounds of “Pieces and Places,” and more forms of play can be added to the list. Additional rounds can focus on the concepts of time (history—games played by children in the past), place (geography—games played in other parts of the world), as well as the social and cultural connections that can be made about various forms of play.

II. Global Play Report (one week, plus some writing at home)
Each young learner will select one form of play and write a report describing its time, place, and characteristics. The Global Play Report can be prepared individually, with partners, or in small groups, and should be developmentally appropriate for each particular class of young learners. The process of writing an “I-Report” involves ten specific steps, all of which begin with the letter I:
1. Identification: select a specific form of play for each “Global Play Report;” [i.e., skateboarding]
2. Inquiry: ask a three-prong statement or question associating play with a specific time and place; [“Did most teenagers skateboard during the 1960s in San Antonio?”]
3. Investigation: state two reasons for conducting this investigation [I want to know the history of skateboarding. My father lived in San Antonio in the 1960s and I want to know what he might have done as a teenager.]
4. Information (access books/articles/newspapers): find two (or more) different sources of information describing the form of play, the place and time, or both;
5. Internet (access web sites): find two (or more) Internet sources, describing the form of play, the place and time, or both;
6. Interview/oral history: talk with at least one person who has had experience with that form of play, the place and time, or both;
7. Innovation: locate one (or more) source of information describing the science or technology related to this play (equipment, grounds, raining the physics of performance, such as pitching a ball, etc.);
8. Index: list all of the sources (at least six) used in preparing the Global Play Report;
9. Illustration: prepare illustrations, drawings, maps, and photographs, etc., that help describe the game.
10. Incorporation: assemble and display the materials as agreed upon by the class. Collaboratively, the teacher and young learners prepare detailed guidelines and expectations for each step (1 through 10 above), set deadlines for checking on progress and assessing outcomes, and establish the venue(s) for sharing final products with peers and family members. Then the teacher can use one or more of the following three activities as extensions to the lesson and as opportunities to assess student learning.

III. Class Poem (one half hour of class)
Each student composes two lines of poetry following a pattern and rhythm provided by the teacher. Lines of poetry must include a year (time), a specific location (place), and a game or sport (form of play). All poetic lines will be united to form a class poem. Figure 2 shows a finished class poem.

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**Figure 1**
Games from Other Times and/or Places

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game</th>
<th>Place/Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guessing Game with Sticks</td>
<td>Native Americans on the Plains (p. 80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eagle and Chiclets</td>
<td>China (p. 146)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Dribble</td>
<td>Italy (p. 233)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobra! Run!</td>
<td>Ghana (p. 19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kangaroo Relay</td>
<td>Australia (p. 317)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coconut</td>
<td>Mexico (p. 76)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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**Figure 2**
Class Poem: Where Will You Be in 2003?

Where will you be in 2001?
Skiing the Alps in the bright winter sun?
Or playing a basketball game just for fun?
Where will you be in 2001?

Where will you be in 2002?
Searching a map to find Katmandu?
Or zipping through town on a bike built for two?
Where will you be in 2002?

Where will you be in 2003?
Sailing briskly along the Caribbean Sea?
Or riding a horse on the open prairie?
Where will you be in 2003?

Where will you be in 2004?
Admiring Egyptian rugs for your floor?
Or stepping within a huge castle door?
Where will you be in 2004?

Where will you be in 2005?
Taking pictures of Kenya on a safari drive?
Or jumping from planes as you learn to sky dive?
Where will you be in 2005?

Where will you be in 2006?
Dancing in Spain with wild twirls and kicks?
Or hiking the beaches and picking up sticks?
Where will you be in 2006?

Where will you be in 2007?
Wandering Stonehenge with your best friend Kevin?
Or boarding a ship at Pier Eleven?
Where will you be in 2007?

Where will you be in 2008?
Sleding with dogs in a cold Arctic state?
Or running to Grandma who waits by the gate?
Where will you be in 2008?

Where will you be in 2009?
Flying kites in Japan in a long flowing line?
Or tasting new foods when you go out to dine?
Where will you be in 2009?

Where will you be in 2010?
Walking past bits of the wall in Berlin?
Or fishing for trout in the creek by the glen?
Where will you be in 2010?

Where will you be in the years yet to come?
As you go with your friends, see the world, and have fun!
Wherever you travel and explore all these places,
Discover yourself and meet a billion new faces.
IV. Playful Pantomime (one class period)
Learners produce a one-minute skit depicting the forms of play described in their reports. On this day, students may come dressed in the appropriate uniforms or outfits. During the skit, students model the equipment, pantomime the associated movements, and are accompanied by music conveying the time and place. When performing for peers and family members, the audience might want to guess the form of play depicted during each pantomime. Or, if time and space allow, students could actually demonstrate the game. This could be done with games played on the ground with pebbles, guessing games, and balance challenges.

V. Time, Place, and Play Wall Mural (Two class periods)
Learners will draw and paint, on one long sheet of paper, images of the various forms of play described in student reports. The teacher can dictate the organization of this mural. For example, sketches could be ordered chronologically to create one giant wall mural timeline (see attached drawing). Or student’s reports could be pinned to a bulletin board beside a world map, with yarn leading from the pinned report to the location on the map showing where the game is played.

Assessment
Students may invite their peers and family members to help them celebrate their completed thematic unit of learning. Two exhibits are displayed for viewing. The large world map shows where the forms of play are enjoyed. Students can stand adjacent to their Global Play Reports and tell the visitors about their research, and answer any questions.

If your students enjoy performances, assemble them on stage. They could perform their Playful Pantomimes, deliver a choral reading of their Class Poem, or unveil their Time, Place, and Play wall mural. Visitors can be invited to view the mural more closely after the assembly and speak with the performers, to hear more about what the students have learned about geography, culture, and history by studying time, place, and play.

Notes

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