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Library Mapping

California Reading Association - Literacy Brings the World To You!

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Purpose: to introduce preservice and inservice teachers to the libraries which are available for the students in their own neighborhoods. This activity is designed specifically for teachers and future teachers to experience a community library from the perspective of a student who is still in the process of acquiring English. This activity could easily be adapted for other target groups of students; for example, a teacher who lives in an upper middle class community and who teaches students from lower socio-economic communities, is encouraged to visit libraries in the neighborhood of the students where s/he teaches.

Introduction in the Pre/Inservice Class

The instructor begins by preparing a map of the community. This can be done on an overhead transparency, the chalkboard, large paper, a handout, etc. However, the point is to begin with the something very concrete, a map, so the students (pre and/or inservice teachers) can visualize as the lesson is introduced. During the introduction, the instructor marks the libraries, the various communities, and the public transportation routes. During the week, the students/teachers are asked to visit the libraries with the following instructions.

Assignment for Pre/Inservice Teachers

- Find the library in the neighborhood of the students in your school.
- Use public transportation to go to this library.
- Before entering the library, sit outside alone for 10 - 15 minutes. Takes notes to capture your experiences with public transportation. In your field notes, write anything which captures your 5 senses as you sit in front of the library.
- Before entering the library, visualize yourself as a 10-year-old who has recently moved to this country from Mexico. You are an avid reader and want to find a good book for the weekend. Spanish is your dominant language; you are still very uncomfortable using any of your emerging oral English.
- Enter the library alone.
- Do not use English while in the library.
- Map the inside of the library; locate the books in your language.
- Sit at a table near these books.
- Describe the library in one paragraph from this vantage point.
- Describe the quality and quantity of books in your language.
- Check out two books.

Reflection in the following Pre/inserice class

The instructor graphs the range of findings into the following categories:

- The availability of the books (quality and quantity)
- The availability of transportation to the libraries
- Personal interactions within the library

Follow-up Action

- The best part of this activity: What do you as a class and as an individual decide to do with what you have learned? You tell us.