LESSON 7  CONDUCTING A COMMUNITY SURVEY

Overview
Students will gain interviewing skills and discover the variety of values and opinions held by different people in the community by conducting a survey of different age groups. Once the surveys are conducted, students will tabulate and analyze the results.

Objectives
Students will be able to:
1. Design and conduct a survey to gather input from a variety of stakeholders on a particular community issue.
2. Create a method for tabulating survey results.
3. Display tallied responses in graphic form.
4. Compare survey responses based on respondents’ ages and length of residency in the community. Suggest possible reasons why people have different values and opinions on community issues.
5. Identify stakeholders who should participate in decision-making on various community issues.

Procedure
Part I
1. Working in small groups, ask students to design a survey that will gather information about residents’ values and opinions on a community issue of interest. A good survey length is about 20 questions. A sample community planning survey is provided on the following page that includes questions in the following three categories:
   - Economic Development and Jobs
   - Natural and Cultural Character
   - Planning for the Future

2. Have students share their questions on an overhead, then have the class members vote to select the twenty survey questions to use.

3. Have students practice taking the survey prior to interviewing community members, to familiarize themselves with the questions and to make sure that they understand each question.

4. Give students one week to survey six people in the community, one from each of the age categories. Students receive five points for each completed survey they turned in. (This greatly increases response rate!)

Part II
1. Once the surveys have been handed in, ask students to divide the completed surveys according to the age group of the respondents:
   a. (Parent of) 0 to 5 years old
   b. 6 to 11 years old
   c. 12 to 18 years old
   d. 19 to 39 years old
   e. 40 to 60 years old

Duration
Two to three 50-minute class periods to develop the survey.
One to three 50-minute periods to compile the surveys.

Materials
Five survey forms per student
Clipboard
Tally sheet
Calculator

Key Vocabulary
cultural character, economic development, natural character, opinion, stakeholders, survey, natural features, balance, franchise, compiling, tabulate, personal interest, respondent

Subject:
Language Arts
Social Studies
Math
f. >60 years old.

(Note: if you have several classes participating in this activity, have each of the classes tabulate just one or two age groups.)

2. Divide each class into groups of five or six students, and give each group member four surveys to tally. Tell each group to devise their own method of tabulating the 20-question survey.

**Teaching Tip:**
Assign one group member to be the tally person. Set up a master tally sheet like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question #</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A manageable number of surveys for each student (within a group) is four. The tally person asks each of the group members to recite the response to question #1, and he/she tallies the responses on the master tally sheet. Repeat until all questions are tallied. Next double-check the responses against the tally sheet. Repeat with another set of surveys. Once all the groups finish tallying their survey questions, a final total for each age group should be calculated by adding the tally sheets together onto a class master tally sheet.

3. Discuss options for graphing the results and select the appropriate format. A bar graph works well. Remind students to label the ‘x’ and ‘y’ axis, and put a title on the graph. Use a different color to display the information for each age category.

4. Discuss the results of the survey. Compare survey responses based on respondents’ ages and length of residency in the community. Ask students for possible explanations for people’s different responses. Identify stakeholders who should participate in decision-making on various community issues.

**Assessment**
Evaluate whether student’s bar graphs are properly constructed and properly display the survey responses. Ask students to write a paragraph discussing their findings and how this new information should be incorporated into community planning.

**Michigan Content Standards Addressed**

**Math**
Strand III. *Data Analysis and Statistics*
- Standard III.1 Collection, Organization and Presentation of Data
  - Students collect and explore data, organize data into a useful form, and develop skill in representing and reading data displayed in different formats.
- Standard III.2 Description and Interpretation
  - Students examine data and describe characteristics of a distribution, relate data to the situation from which they arose, and use data to answer questions convincingly and persuasively.

**Social Studies**
Strand V. *Inquiry* Students will use methods of social science investigation to answer questions about society.
- Standard V.1 Information Processing
  - All students will acquire, organize, interpret, and present information; and use a variety of electronic technologies to assist in accessing and managing information.
- Standard V.2 Conducting Investigations
  - All students will conduct investigations by formulating a clear statement of a question, gathering and organizing information from a variety of sources, analyzing and interpreting information, formulating and testing hypotheses, reporting results both orally and in writing, and making use of appropriate technology.
“Shaping Our Future” Survey of Community Residents

**Students:** Introduce yourself to the person you are going to survey. Tell them that your class is conducting a survey to learn about residents’ needs, values, and concerns about planning and future development in their neighborhood or community. Read the questions to the person or ask them to complete the survey on their own.

1) I live in ______________________________ (name of town).
   OR
   I don’t live in town, but the closest town from my home is ________________________________.

2) I have lived in _________________ County for:
   - ☐ 0-5 years
   - ☐ 5-10 years
   - ☐ 10-30 years
   - ☐ >30 years

3) Choose the age category that best describes you:
   - ☐ Parent of child < 5 years
   - ☐ 6-11 years
   - ☐ 12-18 years
   - ☐ 19-39 years
   - ☐ 40-60 years
   - ☐ Over 60 years

Please express how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

### A. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND JOBS

1. There should be little or no restriction on the type and location of development in our community.

2. The most important thing in our community is to create more jobs to stimulate the economy and attract more people.

3. Franchise stores and restaurants benefit the area by creating jobs and providing more choices.

4. Franchise stores and restaurants may hurt the area by taking business away from existing stores.

5. Property owners should have absolute and final say about what happens on their property.

6. We need to balance private property rights with what will benefit the community overall.

### B. NATURAL AND CULTURAL CHARACTER

7. The natural environment and scenic beauty of this area are important to our quality of life.

8. The design and appearance of new buildings is not important to the community or tourists.

9. New development is acceptable only if it blends with the historic character of the surrounding area.

10. Uncluttered views of natural features, such as forests, lakes, open ridges, and farmland, help to make our area an attractive place to live.
11. More public parks and recreational areas are needed in our community. If yes, what kind:  

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

12. The positive benefits of large business signs and billboards outweighs their negative impact on the visual appearance of our area.  

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

13. We have enough public access to waterfront areas.  

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

C. PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

14. I feel that I have a voice in shaping the future of my community.  

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

15. Citizens and government officials should work together to develop a long-range plan to manage growth, protect community character and natural resources, and ensure the future livability of our community.  

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

16. Laws and regulations passed by local governments should not be allowed to limit the rights of developers and private property owners.  

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

17. This community has changed for the better over the past several years. Explain:  

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

18. Our area has adequate public transportation services available to meet everyone's needs.  

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

19. There are plenty of sidewalks and bike paths to allow students and people without cars to safely walk or bike to schools, stores, libraries, and other places in the community.  

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

20. Our community takes pride in its visual appearance.  

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Additional comments:

Thank you!

The results of this survey will be compiled by students as part of their unit on community planning.

This survey was conducted by: _______________________________ Date: ________________

Student’s name

Developed by the GEM Center for Science and Environmental Outreach and the Western Upper Peninsula Center for Science, Mathematics and Environmental Education at Michigan Technological University, Houghton, MI