

More with Chicago River Maps

Chicago River Classroom Activity

Summary

Here are a series of extensions that you can do with your students using the Chicago River maps they created as part of their Chicago River lesson taught by Friends of the Chicago River.

Extensions

Writing Extension

Have students write a story about what a person would see, hear and smell from a particular location within the Chicago River watershed during the four time periods depicted in the maps.

Reading Extension

The Chicago Public Library has a great online resource that traces the development of the Chicago River from when the Native Americans were the only people in the area to today. Visit www.chipublib.org/digital/sewers.html and click on the History icon on the left of the screen.

Math Extension

Have students calculate for each of the four maps the percentage of the original Chicago watershed (as drawn in the 1700s map) is covered in city.

Supplies

Overhead projector paper that can be run through photocopier

Directions

Photocopy the included sheet with dots onto overhead sheets. Have students place overhead over the 1700s map and count how many dots there are in the watershed. Every dot that falls within the watershed boundary should be counted. Every other dot that falls on the watershed boundary should be counted. Then have students count how many dots there are in the city in the same manner. Have students count the number of dots there are in the city for all four maps.

Grade Level: 5th – 6th

Duration: One class period or less

Objectives:

1. Students will understand how the Chicago River watershed changed over time as a result of human uses.

Materials:

- See individual extension write-ups

Standards:

Standards depend on extension used, but could include:

1.C.2d, 1.C.3d, 7.A.3b, 6.B.2, 6.B.3a, 16.A.3b, 16.A.2c, 16.E.2a, 16.E.3a, 16.E.3b, 16.E.3c, 17.A.2b, 17.A.3b

students calculate the area of the watershed. Then have them calculate the area of the city in each of the four maps. Then have students calculate the percentage of the watershed area that is covered by the city for each of the four maps. Students can make a bar or line graph (with the percent as the x-axis and time as the y-axis) to show the change over time. Recalling what they learned about watersheds, erosion and pollution, have students brainstorm what they think the effect of the growing city was and is on the Chicago River. (The flow of the river has increased, because less water seeps into the soil and more water flows into the river through storm drains. Flooding is more prevalent for the same reason. Erosion has increased due to more water flowing over, instead of seeping into, the land and because the river's flow is stronger, especially after rain storms. In addition, non-point pollution, pollution such as fertilizers, oil on roads and parking lots, salting in winter, from across the watershed, has increased.)

