Florida “EXPRESS” Explores the World
(use activity for any part of the world)

Grade Level: Elementary

Purpose: Students will understand how to tie the Six Essential Elements of the Geography Standards to the study of the geography of world regions such as the United States.

Objectives:
1. Students will work in cooperative learning groups to describe a specific example from each of the Six Essential Elements.
2. Each student group will develop and present an oral presentation to illustrate their findings.

Materials:
- U.S. maps
- large box per group (posterboard or roll paper could be used)
- index cards
- markers
- resource materials - maps, textbooks, travel pamphlets, Internet, etc.
- scissors
- rulers
- copies of Six Essential Elements (p.34 National Geography Standards)
- string

Procedure:
1. Review Six Essential Elements. Post in class on a poster for all to see.
2. Divide students into cooperative groups of 3 to 5.
3. Assign each group a place in your region—from which they will choose a specific place (political or physical).
4. Each group will create a section of a train. Begin with the engine, then box cars, and end with the caboose.
5. As each group identifies their essential elements in relation to the area they are using, place each on an index card.
6. Decorate the engine, box cars, and caboose using descriptions of their chosen political or physical area.
7. When each group has completed the task, explain that the train will begin in the East and travel around the region picking up the remaining cars.
8. To begin, the teacher will blow a whistle or act as conductor calling for the engine to prepare to leave the station.
9. Students will be in decorated boxes, posterboard, or paper built trains. Before the engine can leave or subsequent cars attach, the group must present an oral presentation. This must be done in order for the train to move forward. Each group will explain their index cards using the Six Essential Elements and place them on their car. Before the train can move each group must present the information about their area through a song, a poem or even perhaps a rap.
10. The train adds cars with each group presentation, moving from the East to West.
11. Students in the caboose should provide an ending after their presentation, or include an ending within their song or poem.
12. Take a picture of the completed train at the end of the journey.
13. You can e-mail or snail mail the photos to the Alliance office for the Geography Awareness Week website. E-mail: zkramer@odie.ispa.fsu.edu or Zach Kramer C2200 University Center FSU Tallahassee, FL 32306-2641.

Additional Activities:

This method could also be used in tracing the route of produce and other commodities across the United States. An example would be lettuce traveling from California to eastern markets. Students could apply critical thinking strategies as to how the lettuce is prevented from spoiling, the difficult geographical areas the train perhaps have to be redirected to southern or other markets.

Groups of students could invent board games using the above idea.

Students, either in groups or individually, could develop an illustrated historical time line tracing the history, growth, and development of trains. This should also include research into how railroads lent a hand to build this country as we know it today.

Students, individually, could develop illustrated postcards depicting the rise of the railroad industry in the United States. Have students write a message on the postcard explaining the historical illustration they have depicted on the front. Mail these to another school in the state or district if possible. If not exchange with another geography class within your school.

Benchmarks:
SS.B.1.4.4- understands how cultural and technological characteristics can link or divide regions.
SS.B.1.3.6- Understands ways in which regional systems are interconnected.
SS.B.1.2.4- Knows how changing transportation and communication technology have affected relationships between locations.
GEOGRAPHY STANDARD 18: How to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future.