

## MAPPING ACTIVITIES

### Teachers:

Walking to school helps children gain mastery of their world (neighborhood), an essential feeling of confidence, an experiential base for spatial arrangement, and a sense of direction and distance. Walking to school also builds exercise into the daily routine. Here are some classroom activities that will introduce students to the fundamentals of geography and mapping.

## Reading a Map

### *Grades 2-5*

This exercise helps students understand how maps represent streets, distances, and directions. Students learn how to give directions to someone using a map, and how to read a map legend.

**Map Your Neighborhood** - With a map of your school's neighborhood, locate and color your school. Locate and color the parks on the map. Draw and label other places that are important in your neighborhood (such as a public library, a community center, a store, etc.). Study the legend and find examples of each legend item.

**Explore Your Neighborhood** - Take students on a walking tour around the school. How does the map represent streets around the school? On the map, mark where you walked.

**Measure Distances** - How does the map represent distances? How long did it take to walk around the school? How far did you go? Using a ruler and the scale printed on the map, measure how far you walked.

**Describe Direction** - Maps use the directions north, south, east, and west to help locate landmarks and destinations. How do you judge direction? By landmarks (Golden Gate Park)? By the sun (rises in the east and sets in the west)? Use the map to determine where landmarks are, relative to the school. (Also notice that not everything is exactly north, south, east, or west of school – some might be southeast, northwest, etc.)

**Give Directions** - In pairs, use the map to practice giving each other directions from the school to a destination (your house, community center, etc.). For example, “start by walking north on 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue from Jefferson Elementary, towards the Park. Take a right on Lincoln, ...”

**Additional Activities** - If your school is in a particularly hilly area, you may want to indicate the steepness on your map.