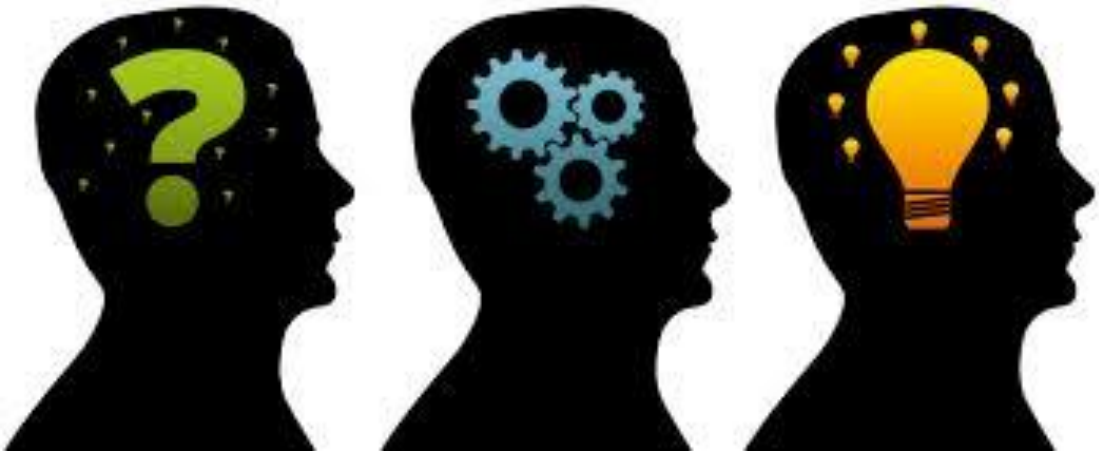
Interactive Social Studies:
Fun Ways to Engage Students in Learning



Melanie Kellam
8th Grade Content Specialist
Georgia Center for Civic Engagement
melanie.kellam@henry.k12.ga.us

Examples of Kinesthetic Interactive Activities

1. **Role Play (Skit)**

Option 1: Have students work in groups to develop a script that reflects a standard (event in history, a conflict, movement, etc…). Then have the groups act out their scene for the class.
Option 2: Have students learn a pre-written script that reflects your standard (event in history, a conflict, movement, etc…). Then have them act it out for the class.
Evaluate, using a Performance Rubric (see attachment)

2. **Basketball Toss**

This is a basic kinesthetic retention strategy, where students are asked a question and if they get the question correct, they receive a point. Then the student is allowed to toss a ball in a basket (or any other contraption) for bonus points. If they make the toss their team or the individual gets a point, and if they miss the toss their team or the individual does not get the extra point. **Bonus strategy**: *You can provide different size contraptions and make the smallest more bonus points than the largest.*

3. **Pass the Globe**

For this activity, the students should arrange themselves in a circle. The teacher may use an inflatable globe, or any extremely soft ball (beach balls work best). The teacher plays music, while the students pass the ball around. When the music stops, whoever has the ball must answer a specific question (short answer or multiple choice works best). If the student answers the question correctly, they get to stay in the game, if they answer it incorrectly, they must sit out the remainder of the game. The last student standing is the winner.

4. **Chalk Walk (Geography)**

This activity works well for teachers where geography is a major part of their standards. Students are divided into teams and are given a black sheet of butcher paper and chalk. The teacher will give the teams ten to fifteen minutes to draw an outline map of a continent, country, or state (depending on your standards) and label as many countries, features, and/or regions required based on a list provided to them by the teacher. Each student must participate, and label one thing at a time (the group can talk each other through it, as well). The group that either finishes first or has the most correctly labeled map wins.

5. **Stand- Up / Sit Down**

This is a simple opening or closing activity where the students are asked to stand-up or sit-down if they agree or disagree with a statement that is either developed by the student or the teacher, based on the standards.

6. **Gallery Walks**

This strategy works well as a way for students to be involved in a kinesthetic activity while critiquing each other's work. Students will display an assignment (essay paper, illustration,

presentation, project proposal, etc…). Students may use a checklist either designed by them or pre-created to walk around the room to critique the work of their classmates.

7. Scavenger Hunt

The teacher will post questions relating to their standard around the room. The answers will also be randomly posted around the room. The students will be given a specific time limit to find the matching questions and answers. This is great as an opener or closer.

8. Puzzle Papers

The teacher will print out images or text reflecting the current standards their working on in class and cut them into puzzle –like pieces. The students must arrange the paper pieces to either match questions answers, define a vocabulary word, or to show a sequence of events.

9. History Guessing Game

The students will be divided into teams or pairs. The teacher will give a stack of index cards that have either the name of an historical figure, event in history, or vocabulary term on it (Technology can replace index cards, by displaying the terms on a Projector where only the person giving the clues is able to see them). One member of the team will provide clues to the remaining team members that describe the word or words on the card (or projector). The team must guess as many as they can in one-minute rounds. The team that has the most points wins.

10. Rapid Recall

This competition game really gets the students going. The class is divided into two teams. The teacher pairs two students from each team based on academic and physical similarities. The two students are asked a question and then must race from the back of the room to the front (racing style varies based on location and safety). The first student to reach the finish line gets the opportunity to answer the question. If they get it right, that team gets the point. If they get it wrong, the other team gets the opportunity to steal the point. If neither team gets is correct, the teacher saves the question for the next duo or reveals the answer to the class and goes on to the next pair. Racing Style is interchangeable (Ping-Pong balls in cups, the first to complete a physical challenge, etc…).

11. Face to Face

This competition encourages all students to engage in a formative assessment of content specific vocabulary. Students will pair up into groups of two. While one student is facing the projector (or whiteboard), the other student is facing the opposite direction. A series of vocabulary words will appear on the projector (or whiteboard), and the student facing the words will begin giving definitions or descriptions of the terms until the recipient student guesses the word. Students are given one minute two minutes to get their partner to identify the term. The pair that finishes the list first wins. You can play the game three ways:

1. Choosing one to four random pairs to compete
2. As teams where two students go two at a time for as many rounds it takes for all students to participate.
3. All students play at one time, with their partner, as the teacher walks around the room to formatively assess who is grasping the terms chosen for a unit.

Social Studies Olympics- This Means War!!!

Students will participate in a day-long Olympic style learning experience. Teachers will decide how this day will go, based on the needs and restrictions at their school. This is usually conducted class vs. class, team vs. team.

Web Resources

Learning Style Test

http://learningabledkid:s.com/multi_sensory_training/page24-kinesthetic2.htm

http://www.edutopia.org/multiple-intelligences-assessment

Learning Style Activities

https://www.teachervision.com/intelligence/teaching-methods/2204.html

http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/clip-save-checklist-learning-activities-connect-multiple-intelligences

Rubric for Skit or Role Play

Criteria	**20**	**17**	**14**	**10**
Understanding of Topic	☐ Factual information is accurate. ☐ Indicates a clear understanding of topic.	☐ Factual information is mostly accurate. ☐ Good understanding of topic.	☐ Factual information is somewhat accurate. ☐ Fair understanding of topic.	☐ Information is inaccurate. ☐ Presentation is off topic.
Cooperation	☐ All members contribute all the time.	☐ Some members contribute all the time.	☐ Few members contribute all the time.	☐ One person does all the work.
Presentation	☐ Shows confidence. ☐ Informative. ☐ Entertaining; engages audience. ☐ Speaks loudly and clearly. ☐ Appropriate use of body language.	☐ Shows some confidence. ☐ Presents some information. ☐ Engages audience. ☐ Can be heard. ☐ Some use of body language.	☐ Unsure of responsibility. ☐ Somewhat informative. ☐ Engages audience intermittently. ☐ Hard to hear. ☐ Some movement.	☐ Portrayal stalls. ☐ Lacks information. ☐ Audience bored. ☐ Mumbles. ☐ Body language is lacking; inappropriate.

Extra Credit for great costumes, amazing acting, highly original research? _____

Final Score _____/60 points____