



KID TOWN

A thematic simulation about community life using reading, speaking, math, and art skills

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PURPOSE

KID TOWN is a simulation in which students role play workers and consumers in businesses they create. They become involved in learning about communities through taking study trips within their real community and from reading (or having read to them) literature related to neighborhoods and communities. The simulation's purpose is two-fold:

1. It provides experiences that lead students to a basic understanding of a community, and how a community's geography, residential and business areas, economics, and politics are all interdependent.
2. It provides *a balanced literacy approach* to teaching beginning readers within their simulated community experiences. Through the use of phonics, sight words, context, and comprehension skills, students are taught to read *strategically*.

“
... *a balanced literacy approach* to teaching beginning readers ...
”

Specifically, while working in their KID TOWN simulation, students experience the following:

Knowledge

1. People have needs and wants.
2. Communities need to have services and goods available.
3. Citizens are both producers and consumers.
4. Leaders are elected based on certain characteristics.
5. Personal information consists of complete name, phone number, and address.

Feelings

1. Excitement in selling what they produce
2. Appreciation of everyone's value as students work together to make their town work
3. Enjoyment of stories about neighborhoods and towns

Skills

1. Reading of word families and sight words
2. Using a decoding process of phonics and context
3. Writing a job application
4. Cooperating in small groups to create businesses
5. Creating new products
6. Using basic math skills: addition and subtraction, measurement and fractions





OVERVIEW

Young children love to play store, play school, and create their own imaginative role plays that simulate the real world. KID TOWN allows children to feel like they are “playing” while you are leading them to learn important social studies concepts and to develop basic reading, writing, math, and art skills.

The simulation begins with students examining a large wall map that they have watched being constructed; it illustrates a new town that will become their simulated world. (Parents or older students can project, trace, and color the town map outline from provided materials.)

“

Your role ...
is to simulate
a leadership
position as
the town
MAYOR ...

”

Your role as teacher is to simulate a leadership position as the town mayor. You will also plan related study trips through your real world community to increase student knowledge and understanding of what a community (or town) is. First you help your class decide on a name for their new town. Next you assign students to cooperative learning groups to set up stores and services, complete with storefronts, products, and prices. Individual maps serve as contracts for the students to record their employment at the various stores.



Throughout the simulation, daily activities are introduced to students through a DAILY MESSAGE, a LITERATURE LESSON, and a BEGINNER STORY. Additional authentic writing, math, and art activities are also connected with the operation of the town’s businesses. Each completed assignment earns BIG BUCKS (KID TOWN money) that are spent in town activities and used for a final graphing activity.

After a few days of the town’s operation, the class receives a TOWN IMPROVEMENT PLAN delivered by your school’s principal. Included in the plan is FATE CARD “mail” for each student. The teacher also announces at this time that a new mayor must be elected for the town. The election then follows and students are introduced briefly to some governmental activities in communities.

Teaching
tip →

Invite your friendly custodian to stop by during his/her “night run.” School staff members enjoy knowing about authentic experiences students are having.



KID TOWN concludes with preparations for the Town Meeting to which parents, PTA members, and the real world local media are all invited. The final project, a student-authored book, becomes a keepsake of the KID TOWN experience. Students also create new products and practice sales talks to sell products from their businesses. Since reading skills have been developed and practiced throughout the simulation, the Town Meeting becomes an opportunity for sons and daughters to demonstrate their hard work. The visiting adults and brothers/sisters are invited to tour the town, buy products, and listen to your students reading about their imaginary town.



TIME COMMITMENT

How much time?: The simulation takes a commitment of about three hours daily for 15 days in a three-week period. (*See the Unit Time Chart on tab 2/page 2.*) However, the amount of time you spend each day studying about and then working within your community is your decision. Some days you may spend three hours; other days you may spend four or more hours.

The thematic unit: Realize the ideal KID TOWN simulation unit is a *thematic* one—as detailed in Tab 4, which presents three organizational options, ranging from minimum to maximum teacher/parent/community support and student involvement.

“
... the amount
of help
you might
receive ...
”

Working with one or more colleagues: Finally, before you decide on your time commitment, recognize that although you can do KID TOWN alone, you can have a wonderful time working with at least one other colleague and his/her students, and parents. Realize that the amount of help you might receive from colleagues and community could make the simulation experience quite astounding.



FIRST DECISIONS - 1

“
... you may
wish to
modify
these
directions ...

This simulation has been designed for primary students. If you are a first-time simulation user, you will likely achieve the most success by following the daily directions quite closely as described in Tab 2: Daily Directions. Even if you have no experience with simulations, you may wish to modify these directions and other simulation materials. Interact is proud that teachers modify and personalize Interact simulations, exercising personal knowledge and creativity to make their teaching units *more than* what the company sends out in the mail.

”

Therefore, before you actually begin KID TOWN, browse through all of the tabbed sections and then carefully decide how you can best fit this simulation into your classroom situation.

● Time and Instruction

“
... it unifies
several
learning
disciplines ...

1. **Beginning the simulation:** You need to choose between beginning the simulation as printed or spending several days immersing students in literature about neighborhoods. Teachers should create their own bibliography. Another option for older primary students would be reading in social studies textbooks and completing a few activities that introduce the idea of neighborhoods and communities.
2. **A thematic unit:** KID TOWN is a *thematic* unit; that is, it unifies several learning disciplines. Since it is a simulation, the learning is experiential—what Interact thinks of as natural and authentic. The planned experiences in beginning reading skills and strategies, math, art, and social studies concepts ensure academic growth. However, if you wish to omit certain activities such as the Beginner Stories, the simulation will not be adversely affected.
3. **Unit Time Chart:** The overview time chart on tab 2/page 2 outlines one example of a daily sequence to follow. You need to allow at least 13 days to complete all the activities provided in this notebook. Most days include one hour of reading-related activities plus one hour of simulation town activities. The reading activities are designed to complement each day's simulation activities.



FIRST DECISIONS - 2

“
... study
trips
capture
students'
interest (and)
stimulate
reading
skills ...
”

Resources

1. **Study trips:** Make advance arrangements for study trips by visiting potential businesses. Determine how many trips you wish your students to have. (See Tab 4: Study Trips for more details.) Also decide whether to have study trips primarily *before* the simulation in order to capture students' interest or *during* the simulation to stimulate reading skills and other hands-on experiences.
2. **School librarian:** Your librarian is a great resource for helping you gather the literature about neighborhoods. Be sure to give her/him several weeks' advance notice before you need the books. Include other related literature as well. The literature lessons are designed to be used with any books about neighborhoods.
3. **Parent participation:** Determine how many parents whom you can count on during the simulation. Parental involvement will determine how you do different activities. Many of the activities can be enhanced by parent participation (see Tab 3: Parents). *The most vital parent component is attendance at the Town Meeting.* If this is not possible, you will need to arrange for another class to act as consumers/audience for the culmination of the simulation. **Note:** *Send out the INITIAL PARENT LETTER at least one week prior to the first day of the simulation.*
4. **Prop box materials:** Be sure to look through the prop box materials lists in Tab 5: Stores. There are many suggested items here that will help the simulation become more real. Many of these items can be found at garage sales and in basements of your friends and students' parents. *Begin collecting these items early.*

Teaching
tip →

Sending this letter home a week in advance will stimulate parental interest and involvement.

Plan ahead decisions

1. Students enjoy monitoring their finances. Decide ahead of time whether to use the CHECKBOOK system, wallets, or a combination of both. This system is more intensive, and your students may need help from parents, assistants, or older students. It provides good practice for students who have been introduced to regrouping. Wallets can be obtained in a variety of ways. You will need to determine which way you want to do this. For example, you can ask each child to bring one from home. (In such a case, add this request to the INITIAL PARENT LETTER.)



FIRST DECISIONS - 3

Other possibilities include having a class set of wallets sewn by a parent, made out of laminated paper, or purchased.

Source:

Discount School Supply

<http://www.discountsschoolsupply.com/>

This surplus outlet has 10 nylon wallets for under \$3.00. It is also a good outlet for colored tape used in art projects and plastic wheels for vehicles. *Be sure to allow a few weeks for delivery.*

“

... include
photographs
in the
culminating
Keepsake
book ...

”

2. At this time you will want to locate a camera if you wish to include photographs in the culminating Keepsake Book. You can add a request for donations of film in the INITIAL PARENT LETTER. Decide whether you will have time enough for developing or if an instant camera is more practical.
3. Determine the date for your Town Meeting. You will need to submit this to your administrator to put on the school calendar. Also, consider the possibility of inviting newspaper or television media to attend. Arrange to have a video camera available for this culminating event.

Professional planning

1. Consider encouraging another teacher to implement Kid Town during the time that your town is in operation. Students could “shop” in the neighboring town. A contrast/comparison of the two towns and their products could be made by using the Venn Diagram strategy as described on tab 6/page 7. Be sure to remind your co-teacher to take photos to use in follow-up activities.
2. *As stressed on tab 1/page 4, make this simulation notebook “your own.”* Save samples of student work for future use or any end of the year productions. Be sure to note changes or adaptations you made or would suggest for your student population. These notes will help you when you reuse the simulation. Include other worksheets and activities that have tie-ins with KID TOWN. If the notebook becomes too small replace it with a larger one to accommodate your complete resource on neighborhoods and communities.

“

... note
changes
or
adapta-
tions ...

”



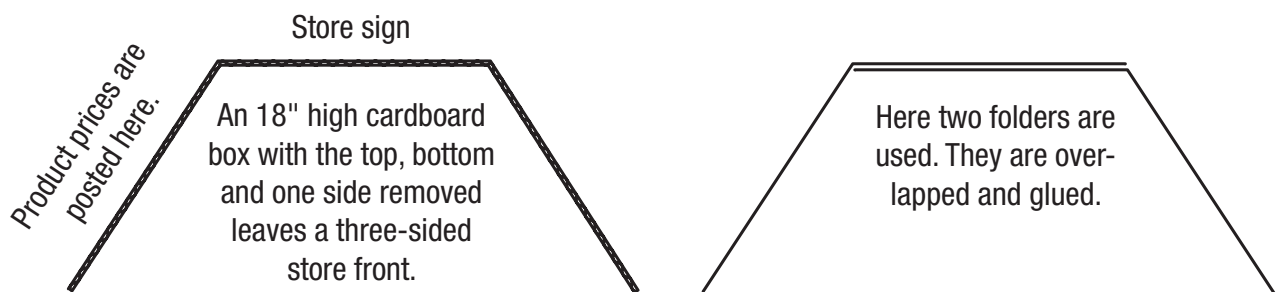
FIRST DECISIONS - 4

Setup directions

1. Plan for the preparation of the KID TOWN MAP on tab 1/page 12. Involve an upper grade class or individuals, parents, or a group from your class to enlarge and color the map to fit a bulletin board or wall central to the meeting area of your classroom.
2. The reading lessons can take place in your regular classroom setup. You may choose to continue your regular reading/writing program or use the KID TOWN activities to provide your reading instruction during the three weeks of the simulation. I have found it most helpful to have my students seated close to me on a carpet area for most instructional purposes, such as the Literature Lessons. The BEGINNER STORIES will be most effective on an easel chart made into big book form to be reread throughout the school year. The DAILY MESSAGE may be done on the board, or chart paper. Depending on your students' ability, you may decide one of the messages lends itself to a lesson in which everyone receives a copy to read and fill out individually.
3. I recommend doing the simulation in the afternoon, replacing part of your normal math or social studies/science thematic unit time. If you already use learning centers, the businesses may take the place of regular center areas. You will need a total of 13 areas. Many of the areas can be portable by putting the supplies into tubs or boxes. A storefront "window" can be provided by using study carrels, three sides of a cardboard box, or two file folders attached as illustrated below. They are put out on students' desks or tables during the hour of the simulation each day.

“
... seated
close to
me ...
”

Store Front “Window” Options





FIRST DECISIONS - 5

Money considerations

Students begin the simulation with a \$0 balance. They must earn money by learning in academic lessons, showing positive behaviors, and working on preparations for the town. The performance of one day earns money to be paid or entered into the checkbook for the next day. The PAY FORM (tab 1/page 14) can be filled out by the students and checked at the end of the day. Wallets can be stored in a “shoe box” safe at the bank (your desk) or at the students’ desks.

Students should have earned up to \$20 before the stores are ready to open. Do not inflate this amount as it’s important for the students to see a need for earning more money. They will spend money quite freely and tend to play a lot during initial operation of the town. They will gradually find the need to earn more money, and will find satisfaction in work. This, in turn, will change their habits to acquire money.

Students can earn or be fined money in several ways:

1. **Completing academic lessons:** You may choose to award a total amount for a student’s best work or divide this into each lesson throughout the day. How you determine this salary will depend on your students’ experiences with money. Increments of 25 cents seem to work best for each lesson. A typical day’s academic work should earn about \$2.00.
2. **Following behavior rules:** Students will work hard to receive behavior bonuses for good classroom and hall behavior. A bonus may be \$1. Fines and penalties for time-outs or returning late from recess should equal the bonuses (e.g., loss of \$1).
3. **Completing special activities at home:** See Tab 3: Parents for more details. A \$1-\$2 bonus will encourage students to perform tasks at home related to the unit. These tasks should be sent home periodically or listed in a parent newsletter.
4. **Receiving FATE CARD mail:** The cards on tab 7/pages 6-9 tell of simulated events in the town which affect the students finances. Some situations affect the entire town so a total dollar impact must be determined by adding or subtracting the amounts.
5. **Receiving salaries by providing services or producing goods:** The amount of salaries will be determined in a lesson by the students on Day 3.

Teaching tip

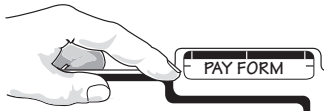
If you are using the checkbook option (tab 1/page 19), you may be able to omit the PAY FORM. The students, however, will still need wallets in which to put “spending money.” My students used “fake” and old credit cards for a withdrawal system. We scanned the card and checked ID CARDS (tab 1/page 16) before giving them any cash.



*Note: * Starred Items may not need to be copied. You may have access to more authentic materials.*

DUPLICATION - 1

Before beginning KID TOWN, Make copies of the following pages. Page numbers are given in parentheses. The number of copies to duplicate is indicated for every master.



Place the duplicated materials in separate folders so that they will be readily available for you when you need them.

Tab 1: Introduction

- KID TOWN MAP (tab 1/page 11) One copy/student + an extra copy to make a display copy.
- TOWN SQUARE MAP (tab 1/page 12) Two copies/student + an extra copy to make a display copy.
- PAY FORM (tab 1/page 13) Copy enough masters to provide twelve daily pay forms/student.
- PAY FORM EXAMPLE (tab 1/page 14) Copy one to make into a display copy.
- CHECKBOOK (tab 1/page 15) Copy enough masters to provide fifteen daily pages/student, with front and back covers.
- KID TOWN COINS* (tab 1/page 16) Start with one sheet for each student. Glue each sheet on cardboard, cut apart the coins and place them in separate envelopes within a “Coins” folder.
- KID TOWN BIG BUCKS* (tab 1/page 17) Start with one sheet for each student. Glue each sheet on cardboard, cut apart the bills, and place them in separate **1 BIG BUCKS** and **5 BIG BUCKS** envelopes within a “Big Bucks” folder.
- ID CARD (tab 1/page 19) One ID card/student. Copy on cardstock, cut apart.
- JOB APPLICATION (tab 1/page 20) Two to three/student.

Tab 3: Parents

- INITIAL PARENT LETTER (tab 3/page 6) One copy/student.
- PARENT EDUCATIONAL LETTER (tab 3/page 7) One copy/student.
- PARENT INVITATION LETTER (tab 3/page 8) One copy/student.
- JOB SHARING (tab 3/page 9) One copy/student.
- READ AT HOME SLIPS (tab 3/page 10) Start with 25 pages and cut into 75 slips.

Tab 4: Study Trips

- STUDY TRIP PERMISSION SLIP (tab 4/page 7) One copy/student/study trip.
- STUDY SHEET (tab 4/page 8) One copy/student/study trip.

Tab 5: Stores

- GROCERY LIST (tab 5/page 17) Start with two copies/student.
- FOOD PYRAMID POSTER (tab 5/page 18) One copy, or one copy/student if desired.
- LETTER FORM (tab 5/page 19) One copy/student, cut apart.
- GUEST CHECK* (tab 5/page 20) One copy/student, cut apart, and stapled into a pad.
- PIZZA FRACTIONS (tab 5/pages 21-26) One copy of tab 5/pages 22-26/student. Make display copies of tab 5/pages 21-26.
- CHECK OUT CARD* (tab 5/page 27) One copy/student, cut apart.

Teaching
tip →

Add your name to the first two letters before you duplicate them.

Note: You may wish to create your own INITIAL and EDUCATIONAL LETTERS. In such a case, use the printed letters as models.



*Note: * Starred Items may not need to be copied. You may have access to more authentic materials.*

DUPLICATION - 2

- MESSAGE FORM* (tab 5/page 28) One copy/student, cut apart and stapled into a pad.
- REPORTING AN EMERGENCY (tab 5/page 29) One copy/student.
- SITUATION CARDS (tab 5/pages 30-32) One copy of each page, cut apart and stapled into a pad.
- PET SHEETS (tab 5/pages 33-37) One copy/student of each sheet.
- FILM REVIEW SHEET (tab 5/page 38) One copy/student, plus some extras.
- TICKETS* (tab 5/page 39) Make five copies on cardstock and cut apart.
- FLASH CARD FISH (tab 5/page 40) Make fifteen copies on cardstock.
- FISHING LICENSES (tab 5/page 41) Copy on cardstock, cut apart, one license/student.

Tab 6: Reading

- STORY RESPONSE (tab 6/page 32) One copy/student to start.
- MY BEGINNER STORIES—cover (tab 6/page 33) One copy/student.
- The 10 Beginner Stories appear in their order of use: PUBLIC LIBRARY, FISHING POND, POST OFFICE, MOVIE THEATER, RECYCLING CENTER, ART STUDIO, TELEPHONE DISPATCH OFFICE, GROCERY STORE, PIZZA PARLOR, PET SHOP (tab 6/pages 34-43) One copy/student.
- The 10 Illustrations for the BIG BOOKS appear in the same order as the Beginner Stories immediately above (tab 6/pages 44-53) One copy for each BIG BOOK created for classroom use.
- MY WRITING JOURNAL—cover (tab 6/page 54) One copy/student.
- KID TOWN GAME BOARD (tab 6/page 55) One copy, colored and laminated.

Tab 7: Town Improvement Plan

- KID TOWN HEADQUARTERS LETTER (tab 7/page 4) One copy.
- TOWN IMPROVEMENT PLAN (tab 7/page 5) One copy.
- FATE CARDS (tab 7/pages 6-9) One copy of each page.
- MAKING A NEW CREATION (tab 7/page 10) One copy/student.
- MAGNET MICE (tab 7/page 11) One copy/student.
- FOR SALE (tab 7/page 12) One copy/student.
- BALLOT FOR MAYOR (tab 7/page 13) One copy/student.

Tab 8: Town Meeting

- VEST PATTERN (tab 8/page 9) One/student.
- VISOR HAT PATTERN (tab 8/page 10) One copy/student, on heavy paper.
- AWARD PATTERN (tab 8/page 11) One copy/student, on bright paper.
- POP-UP INVITATION (tab 8/page 12) One copy/student, on colored paper.

KID TOWN MAP

