

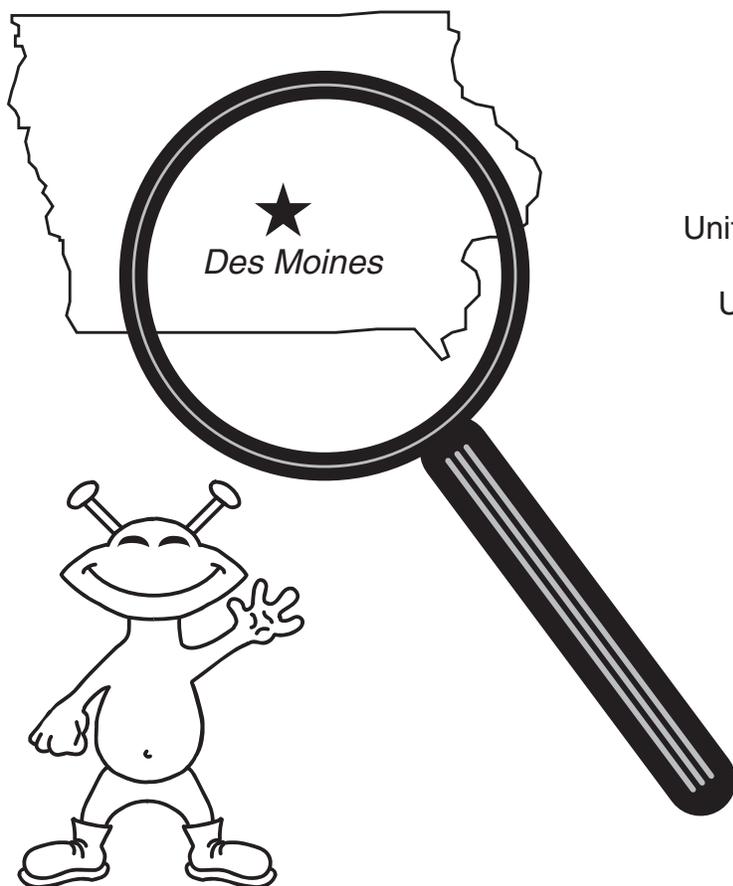
PURPOSE - 1

Many American teachers require their students to learn the state capitals, often by rote memorization, which is neither enjoyable nor long lasting. LEXIGRAM LEARNS is a cooperative learning experience which helps your students learn America's state capitals and information about our 50 states. For your students it is an adventure!

Is a unit on geography for young students necessary?

In a Gallup Poll on geography literacy for The National Geographic Society (*National Geographic*, 12/89) asked 18-year-old to 24-year-old students from around the world to identify 16 places on a world map. The average number of correct answers the students from various countries gave to the questions varied:

Sweden	11.9
Germany	11.2
Japan	9.5
Soviet Union	9.3
Canada	9.3
Italy	9.3
France	9.2
United Kingdom	9.0
Mexico	8.2
United States	6.9



The good news is geography is making a comeback in the United States. In recent years, geography courses have been added to curriculums, and enrollment in high school geography classes increased substantially. These statistics refer to older students. However, if an interest in geography is instilled in our elementary students, if they learn early that geography is an

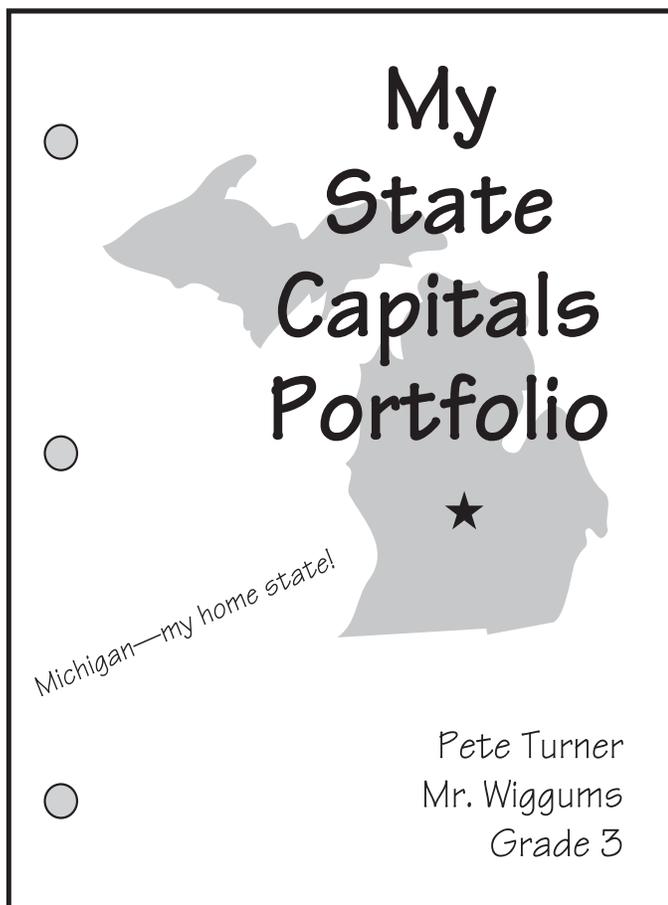
important tool for responsible citizenship, environmental awareness, and political understanding, they will not be content with learning state capitals. Following Lexigram's example, they'll explore the geography of the universe.

Why LEXIGRAM LEARNS?

Resource materials for teaching the state capitals usually contain black-and-white photographs of the capitals and quantities of statistics about the state. Only a few books cover the subject in an interesting way. LEXIGRAM LEARNS was designed so that students would encounter this information along with Lexigram, a humorous extraterrestrial. Your students and Lexigram will journey across America, and your students will teach him about the American states. Here is what they will experience during their journey:

Knowledge

1. Identification of the 50 state capitals
2. Location of capital city within state
3. Geographic shape of states
4. Introduction to the climate, cuisine, history, and sites of each state's capital city
5. More in-depth exploration of capitals through group reports



Feelings

1. Excitement in preparing classroom for Lexigram's arrival
2. Appreciation for the geographic, cultural, and historical diversity of the 50 state capitals
3. Empathy with Lexigram, a small green creature from the planet Kazam, who has also been assigned the task of learning America's state capitals
4. A sense of pride and accomplishment in group presentations

Skills

1. Learning how and where to obtain information on specific locations by writing to chambers of commerce
2. Cooperating as a class so that everyone learns the information about the capitals
3. Cooperating as a group while choosing, planning, completing, and presenting capital/state reports
4. Preparing a personal My State Capitals Portfolio

Your students will take great pride in the portfolios they create about their country's state capitals.

FIRST DECISIONS - 1

Time commitment

1. LEXIGRAM LEARNS can be done anytime during the school year. The time period you choose depends on how you wish to present the program: as study of state capitals exclusively or in conjunction with study of states' geography, history, etc. You may want to study the state capitals over a long period of time (e.g., 20 weeks) or as a shorter, more concentrated unit with emphasis on certain states or regions.
2. How should you determine capital assignments? This decision is best determined according to your academic calendar. Here are some examples:

Teaching Tip

Although two methods of determining time and grouping are explained on this page, feel free to come up with your own that better fits your students' age and your actual teaching situation.

For example, if you are teaching lower-grade levels, you may wish to limit study to the state capitals. Higher-grade level study, however, may include a refresher on state capitals combined with study of the 50 states and state reports.

- **By state:** Study of capitals for a 10-week period ... capital reports given by five numbered groups, alphabetically by state ... five reports each week one from each group every Friday ... 10 minutes per report taking approximately one hour of class time.

Week	Group #1	Group #2	Group #3	Group #4	Group #5
1	AL	AK	AZ	AR	CA
2	CO	CT	DE	FL	GA
3	HI	ID	IL	IN	IA
4	KS	KY	LA	ME	MD
5	MA	MI	MN	MS	MO
6	MT	NB	NV	NH	NJ
7	NM	NY	NC	ND	OH
8	OK	OR	PA	RI	SC
9	SD	TN	TX	UT	VT
10	VA	WA	WV	WI	WY

- **By region:** Study of capitals for a 10-week period; capital reports given by five groups by region, two regions for each group. Most regions contain five states, for those with more or less than five, you may wish to adjust the number of students assigned these regions accordingly.

Week 1: New England States: ME, NH, VT, MA, CT, RI—Group #1

Week 2: Middle Atlantic States: NY, PA, MD, NJ, DE—Group #2

Week 3: South East States: WV, VA, KY, TN, NC—Group #3

Week 4: Southern States: SC, GA, AL, MS, FL—Group #4

Week 5: Midwest States: MI, WI, IL, IN, OH—Group #5

Week 6: North Central States: ND, SD, NB, MN, IA—Group #1

Week 7: South Central States: TX, OK, AR, LA, KS, MO—Group #2

Week 8: South Mountain States: NV, UT, CO, NM, AZ—Group #3

Week 9: North Mountain States: MT, ID, WY—Group #4

Week 10: Pacific States: AK, CA, HI, OR, WA—Group #5

Whichever method you choose, copy the above information onto a posterboard for classroom reference.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE: Weeks 1-2

Each square represents about 1/2 hour to 2 hour

<p>Introduce and explain program</p> <p>Hand out Individual Portfolios</p> <p>Group assignments and Group Portfolios</p> <p>Assign spaceship construction/painting and playing music</p> <p style="text-align: right;">1</p>	<p>Groups meet to decorate Portfolios, choose 5 exercises, and assign individual roles within the group</p> <p>Instruct groups to write letters for materials</p> <p>Continue spaceship construction/painting + helmet/antenna</p> <p style="text-align: right;">2</p>	<p>Decoration of Individual Portfolios begins/continues</p> <p>Groups meet to plan first report and go to library to gather information</p> <p>Continue working on spaceship and helmet</p> <p style="text-align: right;">3</p>	<p>Groups meet</p> <p>Teacher checks on group decisions and progress</p> <p>Continue working on spaceship and helmet</p> <p style="text-align: right;">4</p>	<p>Groups meet to plan group presentations and assign roles</p> <p>Complete spaceship and helmet</p> <p style="text-align: right;">5</p>
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<p>Groups meet, prepare outline of presentations, and give to teacher</p> <p>Teacher checks outlines and makes suggestions as necessary</p> <p style="text-align: right;">6</p>	<p>Groups meet, write, polish, and practice group presentations</p> <p style="text-align: right;">7</p>			<p>Teacher goes over STATE CAPITAL NOTES sheet to show students how to take notes</p> <p style="text-align: right;">9</p>	<p>Presentation Day</p> <p>Groups 1-5 give reports (10 minutes each)</p> <p>Evaluation</p> <p style="text-align: right;">10</p>
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SAMPLE SCHEDULE: Weeks 3-12

Each square represents about 1/2 hour to 2 hour

<p>Groups meet</p> <p>Change roles</p> <p>Review second exercise</p> <p>Information gathering—including trip to library</p> <p style="text-align: right;">1</p>	<p>Decide individual roles for report</p> <p>Write presentation outline</p> <p>Teacher checks outline and makes suggestions as necessary</p> <p style="text-align: right;">2</p>	<p>Groups meet, write, polish, and practice group presentations</p> <p style="text-align: right;">3</p>		<p>Presentation Day</p> <p>Groups 1-5 give reports (10 minutes each)</p> <p>Evaluation</p> <p>(Week 12: the Comprehensive Evaluation)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">5</p>
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MODEL LETTER

October 20, 1996

Denver Chamber of Commerce
1445 Market Street
Denver, CO 80205

Dear Chamber/Bureau,

My class is learning about America's 50 state capitals. We are teaching Lexigram about each state capital. He is a cute, very bright alien from the planet Kazam. Now Lexigram has also been assigned the task of learning about all America's state capitals. My group must teach him about Denver and give a class report. Would you please send me information on Denver as soon as possible? Any brochures and pictures would really help us. A color poster for our room's bulletin board would also be very nice. Just think. Someday when I'm grown up, I may visit your state and go through your capitol building. And I'll bring along all my kids!

Thank you,

Amanda Swanson

Amanda Swanson, Grade 4, (Mrs. Anderson's room)
Elm Street Elementary School
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Lansing, MI 48923