Activity

Taking in the States

Grades: 1–2, 3–5

Overview
Children explore State-sponsored websites that highlight notable places/history/lifestyles such as the Florida Kids Page, the Science Museum site of Minnesota or the "At Home in the Heartland" site of Illinois.

Introduction
From distinctive license plates to state flowers, birds, slogans, and flags, the 50 states of the United States have always had colorful ways to set themselves apart. So why should it be any different on the Internet? In honor of State Government Day, February 7, you can take a trip around the World Wide Web to educational, fun sites offered by state governments and museums. Many states have created special Web sites for students, like the Florida Kids Page (http://www.flheritage.com/kids/) from the Florida Department of State. Kids can investigate
shipwrecks, read the history of the Seminole Indians, or guess Florida state symbols by looking at pictures. Another kid-friendly site is "The Sky's The Limit", about the early days of flight, from the Minnesota Department of Transportation. It has biographies of the early flight pioneers and hands-on lessons, such as how to make a compass.

How about some real-world science and math from the people who use them every day? Students can learn how to track snowfall and analyze precipitation data from the surveyors who do so for the California Cooperative Snow Surveys (http://cdec.water.ca.gov/snow/).

Without getting in a car or plane, you can tour wonderful state museums on the Web. Travel through time to see what life was like in the central United States at an exhibit, "At Home in the Heartland Online," (http://exhibits.museum.state.il.us/exhibits/athome/index.html) from the Illinois State Museum. Newspaper clippings, photos, and artifacts bring the experiences of everyday Americans to life.

Hands-on science activities abound at the Science Museum of Minnesota (http://www.smm.org/). Kids can grow their own mold or explore science and art connections through an online visit with a man who makes windmill-powered whirligigs. Even if the state is hundreds of miles away, you may feel like it's right in your backyard.

- Subjects:
  States, Geography, Science, History, Communication