Elevation of Kentucky

Recommended Grades:

K-5

Time Needed:

20+ minutes

Description

- Students will explore Kentucky's general elevation levels.

Learning Objectives

- Students will:
  - Learn about Kentucky's general elevation levels.
  - Will discuss why portions of Kentucky are higher than other portions.
  - Optional. Will discuss tectonic forces.
  - Optional. Will discuss river erosion.

Materials

- Elevation Maps
- String
- Chains
- Cones

Preparation

- Can lay out chains to divide the map into four general elevation levels beforehand. This step could also be completed later in the activity.

Rules: (e.g., have students remove shoes before walking on map)

Directions

1. Introduce the students to the Kentucky map. Ask students to go to the area on the map they believe is the highest area. Then ask them to go to the area they believe is the lowest area.
2. Divide the students into four groups. Lay out the chains (and strings if necessary) to provide boundaries between the elevation layers. There should be four sections created.
3. Have one group of students stand in each of the four elevation sections.

4. Have the group of students in the first, western-most section sit down. Have the group in the second section crouch down or kneel on the ground, so they are higher than the previous section. Have the third section bend their knees. They should be higher than the second section. Have the final, easternmost section stay standing up. Let the students look at the changes in their heights because of how they are standing.
5. Talk about how the students are sitting or standing shows the general elevations in the state. The higher elevations are in the eastern section of the state while the lowest elevations are in the western section of the state. Elevations decrease as people move from the eastern to western portions of the state.
6. Ask the students if they know why the eastern portion of Kentucky is higher than the western portion. This is because of the presence of the Appalachian Mountains in Eastern Kentucky. (Optional. This may be a good opportunity to discuss tectonic forces if relevant).
7. Optional. The next set of steps are for an optional activity looking at rivers and elevation.
8. Lay out the string to follow some of the rivers. Place the cones on the string along the rivers. Ask students whether they believe these rivers will be at a higher, lower, or the same elevation as the areas around them.
9. Talk about how rivers are at lower elevations than the land around them.
10. If appropriate, ask students why rivers are lower and discuss erosion in terms of a river eroding away the land to make the rivers lower than the land around them.

Connections to Kentucky Curriculum:

4-ESS2-2. Analyze and interpret data from maps to describe patterns of Earth's features.