OUR SHARED STORY:
LATINE COMMUNITY AND BELONGING IN INDIANAPOLIS

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF INDIANAPOLIS

Primary Grades Lesson Plan



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El Barrio Community in Indianapolis

Lesson Plan by Dr. Mariah Pol

Dr. Mariah Pol is the Teaching Faculty and Secondary Social Studies Program Coordinator in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her work bridges research and practice, focusing on social studies education, teacher education, and peace education. Her scholarship examines how teachers engage and facilitate conflictual dialogue in their classrooms after participation in professional development. In addition to her research, Dr. Pol has worked as a curriculum writer for a variety of organizations, designing inquiry-driven, justice-oriented curriculum used by K–12 educators and institutions, with a focus on amplifying diverse histories and supporting youth civic engagement.

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Introduction

This inquiry-based lesson is designed for a fourth-grade classroom and integrates Indiana social studies and English language arts through the investigation of local history. Students engage in historical inquiry while developing literacy skills through close reading, collaborative discussion, analysis of multiple sources, and evidence-based writing.

The lesson centers the often-overlooked history of Indianapolis's early Latine community by examining the experiences of families who settled in El Barrio, a vibrant Mexican American neighborhood established on the city's east side during the mid-twentieth century. Although El Barrio played an important role in Indianapolis's cultural and social history, its story has frequently been absent from elementary social studies curricula. By investigating the local history of El Barrio, students learn that Indiana's history has been shaped by diverse communities whose contributions have often been overlooked. Studying local history helps students recognize that the places they know today were built by people from many different backgrounds.

Indiana Academic Standards

**Based on the 2023 Indiana Academic Standards for Social Studies*

Indiana Social Studies Standards:

4.G.7 Identify migration patterns into and out of the state and explain how they contributed to the early development and cultural structures of communities.

Indiana English Language Arts Standards:

4.RC.1 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what a text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

4.CC.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) on grade-appropriate topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing personal ideas clearly.

4.CC.3 Summarize major ideas and supportive evidence from text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

4.CC.7 Recognize claims in print, image, and multimedia and identify evidence used to support these claims.

El Barrio Community in Indianapolis

Lesson Overview

Estimated Time:	Materials:
85–90 Minutes	Pencil/pen, notebook paper

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How did Latine families create community after moving to Indianapolis?

Throughout the lesson, students investigate the essential question: How did Latine families create community after moving to Indianapolis?

Staging the Essential Question
To access prior knowledge, ask students to imagine they had to move somewhere they've never been. What would they need to feel like they belonged?

Students begin the lesson by reflecting on what helps people feel connected when moving to a new place before exploring the concept of migration. They then analyze multiple historical sources, including the documentary *Beyond El Barrio*, historical photographs, a blog from the Indiana Historical Society, and an *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* entry. Using these sources, students gather evidence, compare multiple perspectives through a jigsaw investigation, engage in collaborative discussions, and develop an evidence-based understanding of how Latine families built community in Indianapolis through neighborhoods, organizations, businesses, traditions, and mutual support.

As the lesson's performance task, students write a letter welcoming a Latine family that has recently arrived in Indianapolis during the 1950s. Drawing upon evidence from multiple historical sources, students provide advice for how the family might build a strong community in their new home while explaining the historical reasoning behind each recommendation. This authentic writing task encourages students to synthesize information from diverse sources while demonstrating their understanding of how migration shaped communities in Indianapolis.

The lesson concludes by asking students to reflect on what they learned from the historical experiences of Latine families in Indianapolis and consider how those lessons apply today. Students discuss ways they can contribute to creating welcoming, inclusive, and supportive communities within their own schools and neighborhoods. By connecting historical inquiry to contemporary civic life, students recognize that communities are strengthened through participation, mutual support, and respect for others.

Lesson Sequence

Step 1—Launch the Inquiry (10 minutes)

To activate students' prior knowledge, begin by asking students to imagine they are moving somewhere they have never been before.

Pose the following prompt and have students participate in a Think-Pair-Share activity with a partner:

Imagine you had to move somewhere you've never been. What would you need to feel like you belonged?

Students should generate ideas such as: friends, school, houses of worship, food, language, music, celebrations, parks, grocery stores, etc. Record students' responses on chart paper or the board, but **do not define the word community yet.**

Transition by explaining that throughout history, people have moved from one place to another for many different reasons. Explain that historians call this movement migration. Tell students that today they will investigate how Latine families who migrated to Indianapolis during the 1950s created a community in a new place.

Display maps from the Appendix showing Indianapolis and the regions from which many early Latine families migrated (e.g., Mexico as appropriate to the lesson sources). Briefly discuss the distance traveled and introduce the neighborhood known as El Barrio (Spanish translation for "the neighborhood") on the east side of Indianapolis.

Introduce the lesson's essential question:

How did Latine families create community after moving to Indianapolis?

Explain that students will act as historians by examining multiple sources to answer this question.

Step 2—Investigating the Past Through Video (30 minutes)

Tell students that historians learn about the past by examining different kinds of historical sources. Explain that their first source will be a short documentary about El Barrio.

Distribute the Community Detective Notes handout before showing the documentary *Beyond El Barrio*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4imcFbUhqWY. As students watch, they should record evidence that helps answer the essential question.

Students should focus on the following prompt: *What evidence do you notice that shows how Latine families created community after moving to Indianapolis?*

Rather than simply recording observations, students should explain what each piece of evidence suggests about how communities are formed and maintained. For example:

Evidence I notice	What does this tell me about community?
Families lived near one another.	Living close together helped neighbors support one another.

After the documentary, facilitate a whole-class discussion in which students share the evidence they collected and begin identifying common themes about community-building.

Step 3—Jigsaw Source Investigation (20 minutes)

Explain that historians rarely rely on just one source. Instead, they compare many different kinds of evidence—including photographs, written accounts, encyclopedia entries, and maps—to better understand what happened in the past.

Divide students into **Home Groups** of four. Assign each student to an **Expert Group**, where they will analyze one historical source.

Within their Expert Groups, students should continue using their **Community Detective Notes** handout to identify evidence that answers the esssential question.

After completing their source analysis, students return to their Home Groups and teach their classmates what they learned from their assigned source. Encourage students to compare evidence across sources and identify similarities and differences.

The jigsaw activity also provides opportunities for differentiation. Because the sources contain varying reading demands, teachers may purposefully assign students to sources that best support their instructional needs.

Sources:

Source A (Historical Photograph): "The Lost Barrio of Indianapolis" Connie Hamm, *Indiana Historical Society*, https://indianahistory.org/blog/the-lost-barrio-of-indianapolis/

Source B (Blog Post): "The Lost Barrio of Indianapolis." Nicole LeGrand-Martinez, Indiana Historical Society, https://indianahistory.org/blog/the-lost-barrio-of-indianapolis/

Source C (Historical Photograph): "A neighborhood gathering, 1950s," Maria Quintana, Indiana Historical Society, https://indianahistory.org/blog/under-the-expressway-lost-barrio-of-indianapolis-part-ii/

Source D (*Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* Entry): "El Centro Hispano/ The Hispanic Center," Elizabeth J. Van Allen, *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, https://indyencyclopedia.org/el-centro-hispano-the-hispanic-center/

Step 4—Performance Task: Welcome to Indianapolis! (10 minutes)

Return to the lesson's essential question: **How did Latine families create community after moving to Indianapolis?**

Ask students to take out a blank piece of notebook paper and write a letter responding to:

Imagine it is 1955, and a Latine family has just moved to Indianapolis. Based on what you learned from today's historical sources, write a letter giving them advice about how they can find and build a strong community in their new home.

Requirements:

- Give 4-5 pieces of advice that would help the family build community
- Use evidence from a least three sources from today's lesson
- Explain why each piece of advice would help the family feel connected to their new community
- Cite the source(s) that support each recommendation

For example:

Visit El Centro Hispano because it helps families find resources and meet other people (Source D).

Step 5—Concluding Discussion (5 minutes)

Ask students: *What did today's historical sources teach us about how Latine families created community in Indianapolis?*

Then ask: *What lessons from their experiences can help us create welcoming communities in our own schools and neighborhoods today?*

Have students share in a whole class discussion.

NAME _____ DATE _____

Community Detective Notes

Essential Question: *How did Latine families create community after moving to Indianapolis?*

Part A: Documentary Investigation

Directions: Today you are a community detective! As you watch the documentary and examine historical sources, look for clues that help answer the essential question.

For each piece of evidence you find:

- Write down what you noticed.
- Explain what it tells you about how Latine families built community

Evidence I notice	What does this tell me about community?
What people do I notice? *What places do I notice?* *What organizations or businesses do I notice?* *What traditions or celebrations do I notice?*	*How are people helping one another?* *How does this help answer today's essential question?*

Part B: Expert Source Investigation

My Expert Source:

Directions: Check mark your assigned source below.

☐ Source A: Historical Photograph

☐ Source B: Indiana Historical Society Blog

☐ Source C: Historical Photograph

☐ Source D: *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* Entry

As you work with your Expert Group, record the most important evidence from your assigned source.

Evidence I notice	What does this tell me about community?
What people do I notice? *What places do I notice?* *What organizations or businesses do I notice?* *What traditions or celebrations do I notice?*	*How are people helping one another?* *How does this help answer today's essential question?*

Part C: Home Group Learning

Directions: Now return to your Home Group and learn from your classmates.

Write one important idea you learned from each source.

Source	One thing I learned	How does this help me answer today's question?

Preparing Your Letter:

Look back at your notes.

Circle the three strongest pieces of evidence that you want to use in your letter to the new family.

Further Resources

Encyclopedia of Indianapolis

El Barrio
https://indyencyclopedia.org/el-barrio/

EL Centro Hispano/The Hispanic Center
https://indyencyclopedia.org/el-centro-hispano-the-hispanic-center/

Tracing a Hidden Presence: The Story of Mexican and Mexican American Indianapolis, 1850–2020
https://indyencyclopedia.org/features/mexicancommunity/

Other

Hoosier Latino Resources

https://indianahistory.org/hoosier-latino-resources/

The Lost Barrio of Indianapolis

https://indianahistory.org/blog/the-lost-barrio-of-indianapolis/

Expanding Our Story: Exploring Indianapolis Hispanic and Latino History

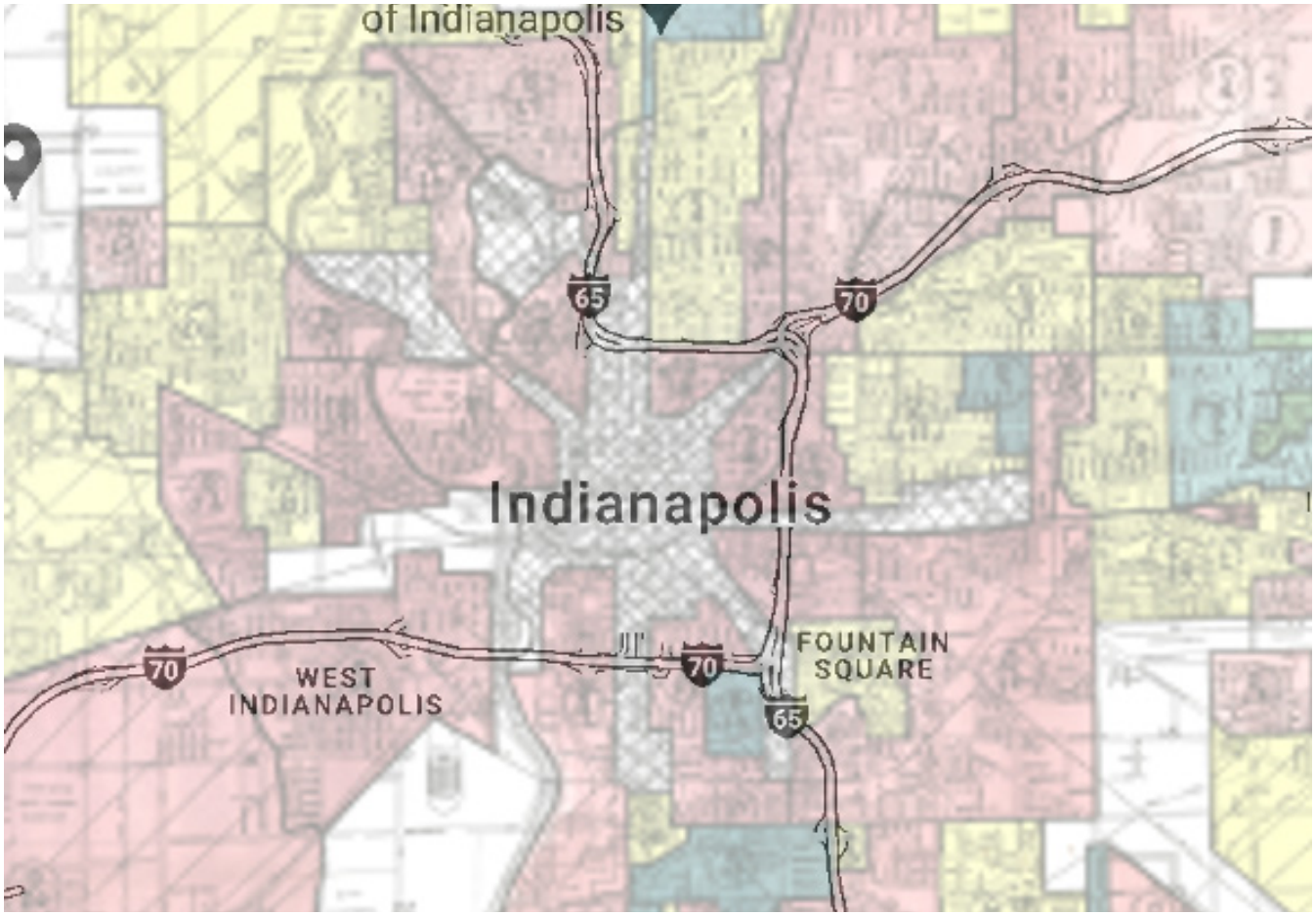
https://indypl.bibliocommons.com/v2/list/display/1304039738/2903807497

Appendix



Map of United States and Latin America

Credit: Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3290.ct003188/?st=image&r=-0.829,-0.031,2.658,1.45,0



An Indianapolis redlining map with the interstate system overlaid

Credit: Jordan Ryan/The History Concierge, WRTV, https://www.wrtv.com/news/local-news/indianapolis/an-interstate-erased-the-lost-barrio-of-indianapolis-but-its-legacy-lives-on

Notes