

INTERCONNECTIONS 21

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Activity 2: The UN and its Members

Purpose: To encourage thinking about the benefits of UN membership; to examine how historical trends have influenced UN membership.

Standards:

Social Studies: NCSS standards

II: Time, Continuity and Change

V: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Mathematics: NCTM standards

Data Analysis 9-12

Representation PK-12

Communication PK-12

Connections PK-12

Materials:

Graph paper

Description:

1. Have students research what countries are members of the UN and when they joined.

A list of member states, organized alphabetically, can be found at:

<http://www.un.org/Overview/unmember.html>

A list of member states organized by the year in which they joined can be found at:

<http://www.un.org/Overview/growth.htm#40>

A list of non-member states and observers can be found at:

<http://www.un.org/Overview/missions.htm#nperm>

2. Discuss with the class:

Why do you think nearly every country in the world has joined the United Nations?

What are benefits of being a member of the UN?

What might be some reasons a country would not want to join the UN?

3. Assign groups of students to one region of the world: North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, Asia and the Pacific. Have groups review the list of UN member states in their region and create a bar graph indicating the numbers of countries from their region

that joined the UN in each decade of its existence: the 1940's, 1950's, 1960's, 1970's, 1980's, 1990's, 2000-present.

4. Have students present their graphs to each other and explain any trends or patterns that they see. For example:

A large number of African nations joined the UN in the 1960's, as they gained independence from colonial powers.

New European nations joined the UN in the early 1990's after leaving the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

New nations from Central Asia joined the UN in the early 1990's following the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), and the formation of the Russian Federation and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Follow-up activity:

The two countries that most recently joined the United Nations are Switzerland and Timor-Leste (East Timor), both of which became Member States in 2002. Have students research these two questions:

Why were they not members prior to 2002?

Why did they join?

Information on Switzerland's reasons for joining the UN can be found at:

<http://www.un.org/av/photo/unhq/switzerland.htm>

<http://www.swissinfo.org/sen/swissinfo.html?siteSect=590>

Information on Timor-Leste's reasons for joining the UN can be found at:

<http://www.etan.org/et2002c/september/22-30/27t-un.htm>

<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unmiset/background.html>