States and Capitols Match-Up

Introduction: Strict memorization of 50 items can be dull and tedious, such as when children are learning states and capitols. Fortunately, they can be learned in more creative ways. With this activity, students can learn the states and capitols by play, which will help the memorization process greatly.

Grade Level and Subject: Fifth Grade Social Studies and P.E.

TEKS: Social Studies 7C, 26A
P.E. 1B, 1L, 3A, 7A

Materials: Cards with the states and capitols listed on them


Activity: Before taking the children outside to play this activity, the teacher will make cards with the 50 states listed on them. Also, a set of cards should be made with the corresponding capitols listed on them.

The students will need to have been introduced to all 50 states and their capitols by the time this activity is played. For the students’ benefit, the states should be taught by their location in the various regions of the United States. It gives the students an advantage when learning the states and the capitols, as well as the chance to become familiar with the regions of the United States.

To begin the activity, the students should be taken to a large playing area, either inside the gym or outside on the playground. The teacher should divide the students into two groups. The students will line up, facing each other, on opposite sides of a playing area about 20–30 yards apart. The teacher will then, having divided the cards into regions before the activity starts, randomly hand out cards from a particular region to the students. One line will get the state cards, and the other line will get the capitol cards. On a given signal, the students will try to find the correct match to their card. They should run to another person and ask if their cards match. If not, they continue to try and find the person with the card that matches their card. When the student finds the person with the matching card, he or she will run to the waiting area and wait until this portion of the game has ended. Each game should last only about 30 seconds. When 30 seconds have expired, the teacher should stop all game play. The teacher should go to the waiting area and check the matching cards for correctness. At that time, it would be beneficial for any mistakes to be discussed and corrected. The teacher will then collect all cards and distribute new ones to the students. The teacher should do this randomly to ensure that students get a chance to play with both state and capitol cards.
To have all students involved in game play, the teacher might want to put some cards in play that are not a part of that particular region of the United States that the students are practicing at that time. The student(s) with those cards should still participate in the game play but will not have a match at the end of the 30 seconds. Hopefully, the other students will realize that the state on the card is not a state of that particular region. If that happens, an optional rule would be that the other students, once recognizing the “rogue state,” can send that student to the waiting area before game play is over.

**Evaluation:** The teacher, in this activity, should monitor all game play. Once the 30 seconds have expired, the teacher is responsible for checking the cards and making any corrections.