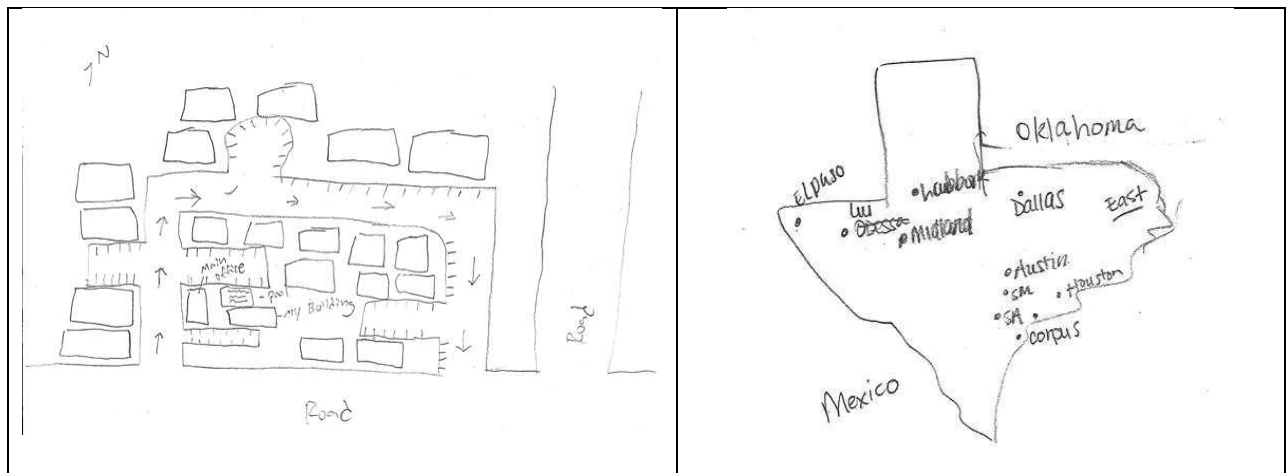


Instructional Strategy: Sketch Maps

One of the most important geography skills is the ability to create maps. Maps are an ideal way to organize and present a large amount of information. As technology advances, students have the ability to create increasingly sophisticated maps using GIS, Google Earth, and other platforms. The sheer amount of data available through these technologies may overwhelm students, resulting in cluttered and unfocused maps. Students may become so involved in using the technology that they fail to understand the purpose of the map. Many decisions are involved in making a successful map. The sketch map can lay a foundation for understanding geographic relationships, organizing information, and answering questions.



Unfortunately, the idea of drawing maps by hand, or sketch maps, can be intimidating to both teachers and students. Many people feel that they do not have enough artistic ability or that their maps must be perfect. It is important to reassure students that sketch maps are for student reference. They are judged on content, not artistic merit, and ALL maps – even the best ones – are imperfect representations of the Earth's surface with some distortion and error. Mapmakers choose specific [projections](#) to minimize this distortion and error. **TEACHERS:** It is important for you to model sketch maps on the board. Watching the teacher create less than perfect maps can help eliminate some of the fear, especially if the teacher purposefully creates a VERY simplistic representation and allows the students to see that perfection is not the goal. It can be difficult to grade sketch maps. In Instructional Resources, you will find two rubrics for your use.

Mapshots

Topic: _____

_____	_____
_____	_____

Timeline: _____

Texas Alliance for Geographic Education, 2014
geo.txstate.edu/tage

Mapshots

There are two methods of using sketch maps that can be particularly effective as note-taking devices. The first method, Mapshots, comes from TEA’s Lighthouse Initiative. Mapshots are note-taking templates where students organize information in a matrix around a central blank area where they can sketch a map or color in a simple thematic map. The sample shows a template created for a Texas History course. Students take notes about explorers from different colonial powers in the boxes around the blank center. In the center, students sketch a map of Texas and draw in the explorer’s routes. They can draw the routes in a different color for each country or each explorer. Finally, this mapshot has been modified to include a timeline across the bottom where students can record the dates. Once completed, this is a powerful study aid for students when preparing for an exam. More information on the Lighthouse Initiative and “Mapshots” can be found at <http://www.tealighthouse.org/socialstudies/>.

The second method, the Annotated Sketch Map, serves as a graphic organizer. Rather than sketching out the entire map at once, the students add features to their map during the note-taking process, essentially writing their notes onto their map. This form of guided note-taking (and guided map-making) helps to alleviate student apprehension by allowing the students to focus on only one step at a time. This technique may be a bit more time consuming than traditional notes, but with guidance, practice and proper time management, it is an extremely effective tool. Additionally, by drawing in the features themselves –taking the time to annotate features and ensure that features are in the proper relative location, students develop their mental maps, an internal representation of the Earth’s surface and a foundation of spatial thinking.