

## Community Bonding

**Number of participants:** 10 or more

**Age group:** 7 years and up

**Equipment needed:** Markers, Posterboard, Notebooks  
Model building materials

Indoor    Outdoor



This group activity incorporates characters that kids previously created (see *Individual Activities: Time Machine*). Depending on character profiles, each character represents a home or business located fairly close to the Oak Grove School, either in a newly formed town or located on the prairie.

The goal is for children to work together building and growing a Southeast Kansas community, or town company, set in the mid to late 1800s. They can build where towns now exist (Parsons, Erie, Saint Paul, McCune, Galesburg, Labette, Montana, South Mound, and Strauss), or where towns once were but no longer exist (ghost towns like, Jacksonville, Ladore, Hertha, Alena, Island, Mathewson, Laneville, Idenbro, Rose Hill and Neola). The group should research these locations to see what made them prosper and grow or wither away. They can also choose to create a whole new town of their own!

The new town company should have the following to thrive (*in order of importance*) :

- A source of drinking water (wells, rivers)
- A source of food (hunting and farming)
- Basic building resources (trees, rock, etc.)
- A reliable network of local trails or roads
- A church, mission, or community center
- Major forms of transportation nearby (improved roads, rivers, railroads)
- A general store (for supplies, groceries, etc.)
- A blacksmith shop
- A sawmill
- A railroad depot, stagecoach stop, or both
- A U.S. post office
- A public school (with a school teacher)
- A newspaper / print shop
- A hotel and/or boarding house(s)
- A bank



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This “real life” simulation can be displayed with class-made maps, charts, and, if space permits, even a three-dimensional model of the town. It would be awesome if some students decided to create characters that represent the native Osage Indians.

*You can do whatever your imaginations come up with!*

As the group of “townspeople” sees the need for adding businesses or skilled workers, they can try to persuade their fellow townsfolk to develop their character’s skills, or to establish new businesses. A teacher or parent should act as “Governor”, to resolve disputes and to make rulings that help to insure fairness.

This can be a very basic activity that lasts over the course of a few days, or it can become a long-term, and quite detailed, project, as noted below.

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The townspeople can decide to elect a mayor, council members, school board members, a local constable, etc. by creating a simple and fair voting system.

### LOCAL ECONOMY

The town can establish local commerce with play money, which can be used to buy goods and services among the other townspeople. A teacher or parent can act as a banker until the students can create their own town bank.

### EXPANSION

Some students may decide that they want to move their character to another area – possibly starting another new town. Any new town company or settlement could then form trading and commerce partnerships with the established town.

*This group activity will help teach students about the power of cooperation with each other and native people, while exercising their imaginations. They will also learn about the value of goods and services and establishing community standards, as well as understanding the importance of responsible resource and money management.*

