Teacher Background: Five Themes of Geography

**Location: Position on the Earth’s Surface**

Absolute location and relative location are two ways of describing the positions of people and places on the earth’s surface. Using absolute location, one might say that the city is located at 48 degrees North latitude and 2 degrees East longitude, or the house is located at 115 Main Street. Using relative location, the school is located across the street from City Park, or it is 10 minutes from the beach.

**Place: Physical and Human Characteristics**

Place is a description of what a location is like. Physical characteristics include such things as landforms, bodies of water, climate, soils, natural vegetation and animal life. Human characteristics refer to human actions or ideas that shape the character of a place, such as buildings, roads, lifestyles or cultures.

**Relationships within Places: Humans and Environments**

Humans will modify or adapt to their environments in many ways. In what ways have the people changed their environment? Cutting down trees, polluting rivers. How have people been changed by or adapted to their environment? Types of housing built, types of clothing worn.

**Movement: Humans Interacting on Earth**

Movement includes the movement of people, things and ideas. People interact with each other in many different ways through communication and transportation of goods and ideas. How do people transport themselves and their goods? By foot, ship, wagon, bicycle, airplane, train, etc. How do they communicate with one another and with other groups of people? Conversation, public gatherings, letters, newspapers, music, television, etc.

**Regions: How They Form and Change**

Some areas on the earth’s surface have similar characteristics but differ from other areas around them. These characteristics may be human or physical. In a human region, people may have the same government, which is different from those in the areas around them. People within a region may speak the same language, but that language may be different from that spoken by the people around them. Religion may be another characteristic of a region. On the other hand, the region may be a physical region and have the same physical characteristics, such as a rainforest or dessert.