Celebrating Geography Awareness Week can be really fun—and will go much more smoothly with a little advanced planning. Use this guide to plan an event with your students, your school, or your district.

1. **Establish a planning team:** Seek support for the event from your Principal or other appropriate school administrators. Form a team with other teachers, administrators, and students—don’t forget to reach out to parents for help as well! Clearly define and divide roles and responsibilities among a few team members, and meet regularly for event planning. Consider the following team member roles:

   - **Event Leader:** Oversees events, activities, and timeline; organizes communication among team members; manages all aspects of event planning.
   - **Activities and Event Logistics Coordinator:** Manages event activities, including food, games, and prize planning; gathers necessary supplies; coordinates logistics for the event.
   - **Volunteer Recruitment Coordinator:** Recruits, volunteers, and helps ensure the event runs smoothly; creates a job list with volunteer names next to each task (e.g., greet and register guests, provide support for activity areas, take event photos, hand out refreshments).
   - **Promotions Coordinator:** Places Geography Awareness Week posters in and around schools and throughout communities; coordinates invitations; seeks appropriate outside partners and sponsors to help with the school event; contacts local and national TV, radio stations, and newspapers.

2. **Choose your event:** With your planning team, discuss how the current Geography Awareness Week theme can work for your school community. Use the ideas at the end of this guide or make up your own. Brainstorm event activities, thinking about what will appeal to different grade levels and reinforce the skills students learn in school. For example:

   - Consider using resources available on NatGeoEd.org and GeographyAwarenessWeek.org to plan an activity.
   - Involve your community! Have your Activities and Event Logistics Coordinator work with the Promotions Planner to partner with local libraries, businesses, and community organizations.
   - Think creatively when talking with potential event partners.

3. **Plan your event:** Allow two months or more to plan the event. Consult with school administrators or other appropriate officials when selecting a time and place for your event. Think about the following:

   - **Location:** Where should the event take place? A large open space, such as a courtyard, playground, cafeteria, or gymnasium, may be needed to accommodate a variety of activities at the celebration.
Date and time: Determine a date and time on the weekend or after school. Consult the school calendar to select a date and time that works for teachers, administrators, and family members.

Materials: What materials will you need (i.e., posters, shirts, prizes, waivers, registration papers, etc.)? Ask local food companies to donate refreshments and local businesses to sponsor your event by providing prizes, supplies, or donations.

Fundraising: Add a fund-raising aspect to your event by raising money to benefit volunteer groups in your community.

4. Promote your event: Spread the word! Build excitement among students, teachers, and community members. Reaching the public through the media is the most effective way to let people in your community know about your Geography Awareness Week event. Develop media announcements before the event, and stories about the event after it has happened to get your community excited about your school-based Geography Awareness Week event.

Publicity Ideas to Promote Your Event

- Put up Geography Awareness Week posters throughout your school, local libraries, businesses, and community organizations (hospitals, after-school care, etc.).
- Team up with an art teacher to hold a bumper sticker, map design, or poster contest prior to the event. Ask a sponsor to underwrite the cost of printing the winning bumper sticker or posters for families to proudly display.
- Distribute flyers or an invitation, perhaps designed by students, to the school community, local community members, and media that advertises the time, location, and description of your event.
- Provide local and school libraries with a list of relevant books to the year’s theme, some of which can be found in a booklist on natgeoed.org, and ask them to promote the books and your event through book corners, story times, book clubs, and displays.
- Use a press release or editorial to feature Geography Awareness Week in your school’s newsletter, web page, local newspapers, on radio stations, etc.
- Promote the fund-raising aspect of your event, if you have one. Companies are more willing to serve as sponsors if they know proceeds are going to a charity. Also, media will be interested in both the nonprofit organization benefiting from the event and the students who are displaying such a commitment to their community.
General Tips for Engaging the Media

- Target your media outreach to the larger school community: students, teachers, administrators, parents, etc.

- Create a media list of the education and local interest/metro reporters and community calendar editors in your area, including reporters for daily and weekly newspapers, magazines, radio stations, television stations, and websites. (See whether your school district main office, state Geographic Alliance [http://tinyurl.com/NGSalliances], or other supporting organization already has a media list that they can share with you.)

- Include mailing addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, and fax numbers on the media list.

- Contact your local media outlets (newspaper, radio, television, etc.) to see if they would like to report on the event. Ask them questions such as:
  - Are they able to help generate a news story about a Geography Awareness Week school-based community event?
  - Are they willing to feature relevant editorials about the importance of geo-literacy and in support of good geography education in schools during Geography Awareness Week? (NatGeoEd.org/geo-literacy)
  - Would they cover teachers celebrating Geography Awareness Week in their classrooms?
  - Do they have a website where members of the community can share their stories and engage with journalists online?

- Ask the local media what you can do to help facilitate coverage of Geography Awareness Week. Ask which reporters to contact and offer to develop promotional materials and story outlines. Also offer to participate in or help set up interviews.

Refer to the Guide to Engaging with Local Media and Using Social Media for more guidance.
Wrap-Up Logistics Before the Big Event

Two weeks before the event, arrange for at least two wrap-up meetings with your planning team. Topics to cover include:

- **Activities and Event Logistics:** Have all the venue logistics been confirmed, supplies gathered, and ample space mapped out for each activity?

- **Volunteers:** Have enough volunteers joined the event team and accepted positions of responsibility?

- **Promotion:** Are students, faculty members, and community members excited about the event? Have posters been placed strategically throughout the campus, school, and local community?

- **Photos:** Assign one or more volunteers to take photographs at the event.

5. **After the event:**

- **Acknowledge your donors and volunteers.** Provide acknowledgement and show appreciation to donors as well as volunteers. Thank-you letters should always be sent, whether by email or traditional mail. If personal information is not collected, thanking the community via social media is a nice gesture as well. Be sure to thank your team for its hard work!

- **Process and save any contact information from event attendees that you collected.**

- **Take time to reflect.** Evaluate the success of the event and determine if your goals have been met. This information will help with future event-planning. Share the results with your team and supporters.

- **Share your story with National Geographic Education.** NG Education would love to know how your event turned out. Write us a message on our Facebook wall at NatGeoEducation or Geography Awareness Week and send a description of the event. You may even find your experiences featured in the next National Geographic Education Newsletter or on the NG Education website.
Geography Awareness Week

School-Based Event Planning Guide for Educators

Celebrate geography by hosting an event or choosing an activity from the list below—or make up your own!

1. **Geography “Missions” Field Trips**: Go to GeographyAwarenessWeek.org to learn how to undertake geography “missions” in your own community. By doing these missions, individual students or classroom teams gain points and work towards earning an “explorer badge” in a particular geographic skill. Missions are also available in booklet form which can be downloaded as a PDF from the web site.

Funds are tight, especially for schools, but these out-of-the-classroom learning experiences are truly priceless. Find fund-raisers that students can participate in to make your field trip possible (such as organizing an environmental walk/run through a community park to raise money for students to fund a trash clean-up program). Solicit local businesses and organizations to fund your field trip or donate money or snacks for a brown-bag lunch.

2. **Geo-Caching**: Geo-caching is a high-tech scavenger hunt. Players use global positioning system (GPS) devices and clues to navigate to the locations of hidden treasures or “caches.” Earth-caching is similar to geo-caching, but rather than searching for hidden stores, participants attempt to identify the coordinates of places—usually unique landscape features such as ponds, rocky outcrops, or other geologic formations. Geo-caching and Earth-caching are great ways to enjoy the outdoors, explore new places, learn how to use GPS technology, and practice map-reading and navigation skills. To geo-cache or earth-cache you’ll need a GPS receiver or GPS-enabled smart phone. You’ll also need a map of the region you’ll be exploring and a method of transportation to visit the caches, such as walking, biking, or driving.

Go to www.geocaching.com and www.earthcache.org to learn more about geo-caching and earth-caching, and to find registered caches near you. Or, go out and create your own geo-cache around important features in your community. These could include community centers, parks, shopping areas, schools, playgrounds, historical sites, tourist attractions—any place that is important to people in your community.

3. **Host a Contest**: Celebrate the diversity of interesting ideas in your community by organizing a poster, art, photo, or poetry contest in your school that challenges students to capture the essence of that year’s Geography Awareness Week theme. Some suggestions:

- Develop a contest specific to the theme, choosing just one specific aspect of the theme to focus on.
- Host a school-wide or grade-wide contest. Display participants’ work in classrooms, hallways, lobbies, etc. Winners may be selected by a panel of teacher judges or by popular vote of the students.
- Show the winning submissions, along with runners-up, in your local newspaper or on your school’s web site.
4. **Are You Smarter Than a _____________ (teacher, geography major, town official)?** Host a trivia night at a college or local school. Reach out to members of the community and get creative with picking teams. Pit professors against students or teachers against parents, and encourage teams to choose geography themed names. Come up with your own geographic questions, emphasizing different aspects of the year’s theme. Get local businesses to provide prizes, and donate a portion of any entry fees collected to a charitable organization.

5. **Community Clean-Up:** Rural, suburban and urban communities all have a history of development and environmental change. At some point in the past, the land underneath your feet was untamed wilderness, and look at it today! Organize students to explore and research the geographic history of their own community.

6. **Explore Local Environmental Change:** Rural, suburban and urban communities all have a history of development and environmental change. At some point in the past, the land underneath your feet was untamed wilderness, and look at it today! Organize students to explore and research the geographic history of their own community. Some suggestions:

   - Ask students to imagine what their neighborhood may have looked like 10, 25, 50, even 100 years ago, and to draw what they think.
   - Have students explore their backyard or local area for clues of past residents, wildlife, and other artifacts.
   - Do students know older people who have lived in the neighborhood for many years? Suggest that the students interview such people, asking how the landscape and structure of the town have changed over their lifetimes. Ask if they have any old photographs depicting the community, and if they may be photocopied.
   - Have students check local libraries for historical photographs and information. The Internet may also be a good source for information and old photos.
   - Juxtapose old photographs with ones at the same location today, and note the changes.
   - Discuss the different elements of environmental change and development in the community over time. As a class, try to create a narrative throughout history of their town or city.

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**Partner College groups with a local school to do a trash clean-up.** College students can help school kids with a fund-raising project to pay for the field trip. Then make T-shirts, buttons, stickers, or other fun items for students to wear. Work in teams and have a competition to see who can pick up the most garbage!