

GUIDE TO ELABORATE TOWNSHIP SCHOOL ATLASES.

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A project for the elaboration of Township School Atlases is being developed in the state of Minas Gerais (Brazil), since 1994. The purpose of these atlases is to fulfill the need for didactic material for the study of the local (municipal) space, the main theme of the official program for the teaching of geography in elementary school in that state of Brazil. It is considered that the learning of basic geographical concepts can be made easier if they are related to the student's everyday environment, the space that is closer, more familiar and concrete to him. The methodology proposed here intends to make possible the development of abilities and competence in dealing with geographical knowledge, through interactive activities. The latter are presented in a school atlas which is specifically made to show the space of the township where the child lives. The exercises and the graphic documents presented are unfinished to motivate the student to do research himself. He has to do some of the required data registration and classification, as well as reason and argument in order to get to his own conclusions. The atlases also aim at helping to form citizens who are aware of their obligations and rights. In other words, people who know the environment that surrounds them and the role they must play in their own community. The state of Minas Gerais has 853 townships, which make it impossible, for the project team, to elaborate an atlas for each locality. Thus, the Guide to Elaborate Township School Atlases corresponds to a new phase of the research project. It presents the methodology for the elaboration of didactic material similar to that developed in the already published atlases: the school atlases of the towns of Contagem (1996), Gouveia (three editions: 1997, 1998 and 1999), São Gonçalo do Rio Preto (1998), Santo Antônio do Itambé (1999) and Pedro Leopoldo (2000). The Guide presents the theoretical and methodological presuppositions of the research; it indicates and discusses the possible sources of documentation; it explains the objectives and the structure of each proposed exercise; it orients the choice of statistical data to build the thematic sheets; it gives directions to teachers involved directly in the classroom work, as well as to those who will elaborate the local material, about how to build tables, diagrams and simple maps; and it also helps them on how to write texts which are adequate to the learning level of the students to whom the atlases are directed, that is, third and fourth graders. The Guide provides some recommendations about how to prepare the training courses for the teachers who will use the material. It also presents a complementary bibliography and a listing of useful addresses for the development of the local research.