

# Educator Update

## Census In Schools

December 2008

### 2010 Census

The Census in Schools Web site, which will be released early next year will contain a section on the 2010 Census as well as new lesson plans and teaching ideas and activities for students.

As we get closer to Census Day (April 1, 2010), be sure to visit the Census Web site for the latest news. Go to [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) and click on “2010 Census.”

### Cookie Cutters Fun Facts on the Radio

The holiday season brings plates full of goodies — especially cookies. They come in all flavors and in all shapes and sizes. That’s why the first week of December is Cookie Cutter Week. In kitchens all over the country, bakers will be digging in the back of utensil drawers and boxes on pantry shelves to find their cookie cutters, some of them



passed down through the family for generations. But today’s hectic lifestyle, with long working hours and long commutes, doesn’t leave the time for many to

do their own baking. To fill the gap, there are nearly 7,500 retail bakeries across the U.S. — where baked goods are prepared on site, including many kinds of cookies in traditional holiday shapes.

Profile America is a daily, 60-second feature that uses interesting vignettes from key events, observances or commemorations to highlight information collected by the Census Bureau.

### What’s the Connection? – Between the Census Bureau and the News You Hear

Private and public policymakers and analysts rely on Census Bureau information to help make decisions about the current economic climate. Thus this connection between Census Bureau data and our lives is ongoing. The Census Bureau provides the public and media with a variety of data also available to teachers for personal and/or classroom use. At the end of August, the Public Information Office of the Census Bureau put out a news release titled “Household Income Rises, Poverty Rate Unchanged, Number of Uninsured Down.” Data supporting these findings were compiled from information collected in the 2008 Current Population Survey’s Annual Social and Economic Supplement and the American Community Survey. Curious? Go to the Census Bureau homepage, < [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) >. Under “Newsroom,” click on “Releases” and under “Decennial and ACS,” click on August 26, 2008.



### Classroom Activities for December

Recognizing that educators want to tailor these activities to their students' knowledge, skill and abilities, we have not identified each activity at a

# Educator Update

## Census In Schools

specific grade level. Educators can mix and match all activities to create practical applications to existing curricula.

### “It’s in the Mail”

**Fact:** Last year the U.S. Postal Service estimated that between the end of November and the end of December, it would deliver 20 billion pieces of mail. The busiest mailing day was expected to be December 17.



**Activity:** Tell students that they are going to conduct a poll of 10 relatives and/or neighbors, asking each person to estimate the number of holiday cards they will send. This survey data will be used to create a visual representation of the respondents’ information. Students will record the information on a grid they prepare in class: (10 names should appear across the lower horizontal plane; the numbers 0-50 should appear in increments of 5 on the vertical plane). Students will calculate the average number of cards per person and report the average number back to the class. As a class, create a bar or line graph indicating the number of students who had an average of 1-5, 6-10, 11-20, 21-30, 31-40, 40–plus cards sent by their respondents.

**Activity:** Have students write a holiday letter to friends telling about their activities for 2008 and plans for 2009. Follow the language arts format for a friendly letter.

**Activity:** Have students hypothesize about this year’s peak holiday mail delivery date. To facilitate this assignment, have students consult this year’s calendar, last year’s peak delivery date,

and other variables that might influence their date choice. To verify students’ hypotheses, assign each student a different date to read the newspaper and watch media reports about this year’s actual peak date mail delivery volume. Determine how close this year’s date is to the date of students’ hypotheses.

### “Rush to the Stores”

**Fact:** In December 2007, retail sales in the nation’s department stores totaled \$30.5 billion. This figure represented a 42 percent jump from the previous month’s sales.



**Activity:** Discuss with students whether they think the same jump in sales will occur this year. What factors will affect December sales this year? Survey the class to determine whether students plan to maintain or reduce their expenditures for holiday gifts. Discuss possible options for gifts other than monetary purchases, for example gifts of time – babysitting, washing cars, etc.

**Fact:** In 2007, U.S. retailers reported sizeable jumps in sales between November and December: book stores – 78%; clothing stores– 37%; jewelry stores – 137%; radio, TV, and other electronics stores – 46%; and sports stores – 53%.

**Activity:** Have students prepare a bar graph indicating the information above and tell them to leave space next to each category so that they can draw in a bar graph with 2008 information once it is released by the press. Throughout the month of

# Educator Update

## Census In Schools

December the media will release information about retail sales, and students could prepare comparative graphs with 2007 and 2008 sales to date.

### “Where the Toys are ... Made”

**Fact:** The value of U.S. toy imports including stuffed toys (excluding dolls), puzzles, and electric trains from China reached \$4.9 billion between January and August 2008. China was the leading country of origin for stuffed toys coming into this country, as well as for a number of other popular holiday gifts.



These include roller skates (\$42 million), sports footwear (\$136 million), golf equipment (\$638 million), and basketballs (\$31 million). China leads Indonesia as the leading supplier of ice skates (\$42 million versus \$10 million), with Thailand ranking third (\$9 million).

**Activity:** Have students research the issue of Chinese manufacture of toxic toys and products in 2007 and discuss the possible effects on export of toys and other products to the U.S. during January – August 2008.

Elementary grade students can investigate the country of origin of selected items in their homes,

such as stuffed toys, puzzles, electric trains, sports footwear, golf equipment, roller skates, ice skates, and basketballs. Students should list the name of the item and the country of origin and bring the information to class. Compile a class record, totaling the student-generated numbers, and indicating the number of each of the items produced in China and the total number of each

item produced in Asia. Create a bar graph depicting the information and discuss the results.

Upper grade students can compare and contrast exports, imports, and balance of goods from China in 2007 and 2008. Go to

< [http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/Press-Release/current\\_press\\_release/press.html](http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/Press-Release/current_press_release/press.html) >

(provided in Facts for Features item). Scroll down to the “Prior Issues” section, choose “August 2008,” and click on “Exhibit 14 and Exhibit14A.” Have students compare and contrast information provided for export, imports, and balance of goods from China for selected months in 2007 and 2008. Did Chinese imports/exports and balance of trade increase or decrease between July and August of each year and between July 2008 and 2009 and August 2008 and 2009? Discuss factors that could have affected these results.

Each fact in these classroom activities comes from the “2008 Holiday Season” Facts for Features. For the full version, visit < [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) > and click on “Facts for Features.”

### Contact Census in Schools

If you would like to share any thoughts or ideas about ways to introduce the 2010 Census to your students, please call 1-800-396-1167 or e-mail us at: [Census.in.Schools@census.gov](mailto:Census.in.Schools@census.gov). Additional information about Census in Schools can be found at our Web site:

<http://www.census.gov/dmd/www/teachers.html>.

To subscribe or get general information about this mailing list, visit:

< <http://lists.census.gov/mailman/listinfo/census-schools> >.