

Educator Guide

Catalina Island Minecraft Education World

EXPLORE

LISTEN

INVESTIGATE

IMAGINE

DESIGN

SHARE



CATALINA ISLAND: ISLAND IN BALANCE

Students explore Catalina as a connected system and design a proposal for the former Cubs spring-training area that keeps the island in balance.



1. Introduction

These build challenges use students' interest in gaming to promote healthy gaming environments, positive digital citizenship, collaboration, and creative problem-solving. Through project-based learning, students research community needs, explore multiple perspectives, and design innovative solutions to real-world challenges.

Our goals

- Connect student learning to authentic community issues and future career pathways.
- Strengthen leadership, communication, teamwork, and career-readiness skills through project-based learning.
- Empower students to become advocates for healthier communities through civic engagement and creative problem-solving.

Build challenges align to

- Health Education Content Standards and Framework
- California Career Technical Education (CTE) Model Curriculum Standards
- California Environmental Principles & Concepts (EP&Cs)
- California State Seal of Civic Engagement (SSCE)
- California History-Social Science Content Standards and Framework
- California Content Standards for ELA (Speaking & Listening)



2. Getting Started

Technical prerequisites

- ☐ Download Minecraft Education.
- ☐ Open the Schools Reinventing Counties world from the in-game library.
- ☐ Access this Educator Guide.
- ☐ Verify student hardware: Chromebook, iPad, Mac, or PC.

Licensing requirements

Anyone can try Minecraft Education, but full participation requires a license. Your district IT administrator assigns licenses through the **Microsoft 365 Admin Center**. Make sure all student accounts are active before starting the challenge.



3. Battle of the Counties at a Glance

Teams of four explore the world, listen to NPCs, and build a proposal in Minecraft Education. Every team submits the same four parts; expectations grow by grade band.

Requirement	Grades 3–5	Grades 6–8	Grades 9–12
Build	2+ purposeful features	3+ features that work together	4+ purposeful elements working as one proposal
Evidence	Uses something learned in the world	Uses evidence and perspectives from the world	Uses specific learning + a credible external source; addresses a tradeoff or constraint
Board	1+ Board near the build with the sections listed on each city's prompt (4–7 sections depending on grade band)		
NPC	1+ NPC with a name, a purpose tied to the build, dialogue that explains the idea, and 1+ relevant external link		
Virtual tour	3 minutes or less · shows the build, Board, and NPC · includes every team member's voice · submitted as MP4		
Rubric	4 criteria scored 1–4 (16 points): Challenge, Learning & Evidence, Design & Creativity, Communication & Team Voice. Level 3 = all requirements met.		

Classroom Materials

Battle Prompt & Rubric

One per challenge and grade band. Page 1 is the student prompt; page 2 is the scoring rubric.

Student Field Notebook

One per grade band. Guided questions for each NPC, plus a Plan Your Build page for every challenge.

This Educator Guide

Standards alignment, learning objectives, stakeholder perspectives, and optional extension work with its own rubric.

The video is the proposal. In Battle of the Counties, the Build, Board, NPC, and Virtual Tour together make up the team's proposal, and they are the only parts that are judged. Each challenge also includes an optional **Extend the Learning** box (Written Proposal, Research Summary, Live Pitch) for teachers who want a longer classroom unit; score that work with the Extend the Learning Rubric in the appendix.

THE CHALLENGE

Catalina Island

Island in Balance

Standards Alignment



California Environmental Principles & Concepts (EP&Cs)

Principle V: Decisions Affecting Resources

Decisions affecting resources and natural systems are based on a wide range of considerations and decision-making processes.



California Environmental Principles & Concepts (EP&Cs)

Principle II: People Influence Natural Systems

The long-term functioning and health of terrestrial, freshwater, coastal, and marine ecosystems are influenced by their relationships with human societies.



California CTE Model Curriculum Standards

Hospitality, Tourism, and Recreation · Energy, Environment, and Utilities

Students examine how tourism and recreation economies interact with environmental resources, and how land and habitat are managed.



California History–Social Science Content Standards

Geography of California

Students describe the physical and human geographic features that define places and regions in California.



California State Seal of Civic Engagement (SSCE)

Civic Engagement Components

Participate in one informed civic engagement project that addresses real-world problems and requires students to identify and inquire into civic needs or problems, consider varied responses, take action, and reflect on efforts.



California Content Standards for ELA

Speaking and Listening Standards

Present claims and findings emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details. Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.

Project Overview

Students explore Catalina Island as a connected system. They investigate community life in Avalon, island history, tourism, marine and land ecosystems, endemic and introduced species, habitat, wildfire, and restoration, and notice how the same island can hold very different needs and perspectives.

Using Minecraft Education, students develop a proposal for the former Cubs spring-training area that responds to a need or opportunity they discovered, and explain why their idea belongs on Catalina.

Exploration Stations

The Student Field Notebook is organized around these eight stations:

1

Avalon & Community Life

Residents, local businesses, and island living

2

Island History

How past decisions shaped the island

3

Tourism & Visitors

Benefits and pressures of a visitor economy

4

Marine Life

Ocean ecosystems around the island

5

Endemic Species

Plants and animals found nowhere else

6

Mule Deer & Bison

Introduced animals and their effects on habitat

7

Habitat, Wildfire & Restoration

How landscapes recover and are protected

8

Former Cubs Spring-Training Site

The build site and its possibilities

Build Challenge Scenario

Catalina is home to residents, visitors, businesses, wildlife found nowhere else, and landscapes shaped by history, introduced animals, and wildfire. Every decision on an island affects more than one part of the system.



THE BIG QUESTION

What should the former Cubs spring-training area become, and how can it keep the island in balance?



YOUR ROLE

Island Planners

Before designing, investigate the environment, research stakeholder perspectives, and consider multiple points of view.



ESSENTIAL BUILD QUESTION

Build for Catalina: how can we create something that responds to a need or opportunity we discovered on the island?

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Understand Catalina as an interconnected system of people, economy, and ecosystems.
- Explain the difference between endemic and introduced species and why it matters.
- Analyze how tourism, community life, and conservation can support or compete with one another.
- Examine wildfire, habitat, and restoration as community and environmental issues.

Potential Build Elements

- Restoration or native habitat areas
- Learning or research centers
- Community spaces for residents
- Sustainable visitor experiences
- Wildfire-resilient design features
- Spaces that share island history

- Weigh competing priorities, tradeoffs, and constraints in a place-based decision.
- Design an innovative Minecraft Education proposal that fits the island and the site.

Stakeholder (NPC) Perspectives & Questions to Consider

Students should consider multiple perspectives when developing their proposal:

Residents	What does the community need to live and work well on the island?
Visitors & Tourism Businesses	How can visitors enjoy Catalina without harming it?
Conservation Scientists	How would the idea affect endemic species and habitat?
Marine Scientists	How are ocean health and island life connected?
Fire & Land Managers	How can the site reduce wildfire risk and support restoration?
Historians	What part of Catalina's history should the site remember?

Students should use evidence from their exploration to develop a proposal that responds to a real need and balances Catalina's competing priorities.

Battle Submissions

The video is the proposal. These four parts are what judges score with the Battle rubric.

1 Minecraft Education Build A proposal for the former Cubs spring-training area. The build should show: ■ A clear response to the need or opportunity ■ Who or what it serves ■ How it connects to Catalina's people, history, or ecosystems ■ How it considers tradeoffs and long-term impact	2 Board · the written proposal, in brief Placed near the build, using the sections on the grade-band prompt, such as: ■ The need or opportunity ■ Our proposal ■ Who or what it serves ■ Evidence or community connection ■ Why it matters
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Interactive NPC

A character who helps visitors understand the idea:

- A name and a purpose tied to the build
- Dialogue that explains the idea and why it matters
- 1+ relevant external link (a research source)



Virtual Tour · the proposal

3 minutes or less, MP4, every team member's voice. Show the build, Board, and NPC, and explain:

- **The Need:** What did you discover?
- **The Solution:** What should the site become?
- **The Balance:** What tradeoffs did you weigh?
- **The Evidence:** What supports your proposal?
- **The Future:** How does it help Catalina?

EXTEND THE LEARNING

Optional · classroom use · not scored in Battle of the Counties

Written Proposal

A proposal explaining:

- The need or opportunity and why it matters on Catalina
- What the site should become
- Who or what benefits
- How evidence and perspectives informed the design
- Tradeoffs the team considered

Research Summary

Evidence-based research addressing:

- Island ecosystems, endemic and introduced species
- Tourism and community life
- Wildfire, habitat, and restoration
- The history of the site
- Cited sources

Live Pitch

Deliver the tour content live to a real audience, such as a school board, city council, or community partners.

Score extension work with the **Extend the Learning Rubric** in the appendix.

Extend the Learning Rubric

Written Proposal · Research Summary · Live Pitch | Score: ____ / 16

Not scored in Battle of the Counties. The Battle is judged only on the Build, Board, NPC, and Virtual Tour using each challenge's Battle rubric. Use this rubric for optional classroom extension work.

CRITERIA	1 Emerging	2 Developing	3 Progressing	4 Excelling	PTS
Claim & Purpose What and why	No clear need or proposal is stated.	Names a need or idea, but the proposal or who it serves is vague.	Clearly states the need, the proposal, and who it serves.	A precise, compelling claim that connects the need, the proposal, and its intended impact.	/ 4
Evidence & Sources Research quality	Little or no evidence; no sources cited.	Some evidence, but weakly connected to the claim, or sources are not credible or not cited.	Relevant evidence from the world and at least one credible, cited source support key points.	Multiple credible, well-cited sources are synthesized to justify each major design choice.	/ 4
Perspectives & Reasoning Stakeholders · tradeoffs	Considers only one point of view.	Mentions other stakeholders, but does not explain how they shaped the proposal.	Explains how stakeholder perspectives informed the design and addresses a tradeoff or constraint.	Weights competing perspectives and tradeoffs thoughtfully and explains why the proposal is the best balance.	/ 4
Organization & Communication Writing · speaking	Hard to follow; errors interfere with meaning.	Some organization; errors or unclear language distract the reader or audience.	Logically organized, with clear language suited to the audience and few errors.	Polished and persuasive; structure, language, and (for pitches) delivery strengthen the argument.	/ 4

Use it for

- **Written Proposal:** score all four criteria.
- **Research Summary:** focus on Evidence & Sources and Perspectives & Reasoning.
- **Live Pitch:** score all four; include delivery under Organization & Communication.

Adjust by grade band

- **3–5:** accept oral responses, drawings with labels, or sentence frames. A tradeoff is optional.
- **6–8:** expect at least one cited source and one stakeholder perspective.
- **9–12:** expect credible external sources and a clearly reasoned tradeoff.