

# Eight Gold Stars on a Field of Blue

**Developed by:** Jennifer Reiter

**Discipline / Subject:** Social Studies

**Topic:**

Geography – State Studies

Classroom Community

**Grade Level:** 1-5

**Resources / References / Materials Teacher Needs:**

How Alaska Got Its Flag by Bernd & Susan Richter –OR–

Benny’s Flag by Phyllis Krasilovsky

**Lesson Summary:**

Students will learn the history behind Alaska’s flag (the only state flag designed by a child!) and then create a flag for their classroom.

**Standard’s Addressed: (Local, State, or National)**

National Council for Social Studies Thematic Standard:

- Civic Ideals and Practices

**Learning Objectives:**

The learner will:

- Identify the history behind Alaska’s flag
- Identify the symbols used in Alaska’s flag
- Design a flag that represents their classroom

**Assessment:**

The students’ explanations behind the chosen symbols can be assessed

**Procedural Activities:**

I use this lesson at the beginning of the year as a way to help build community in our room. It also ties in well because we study the fifty states towards the start of the year.

**Introduction:**

Share with the students the story of the creation of Alaska’s flag. I use the book How Alaska Got its Flag by Bernd and Susan Richter which I picked up in a gift shop in Alaska years ago. You can find it here: <http://www.alaskachildrensbooks.com/flag.html> There is now a newer book out called Benny’s Flag that could also be used.

**Procedure:**

1. Discuss the meaning behind the symbols on the flag. According to Benny Benson himself, “The blue field is for the Alaska sky and the forget-me-not, and Alaskan flower. The North Star is for the future state of Alaska, the most northerly in the union. The Dipper is for the Great Bear – symbolizing strength.”
2. Have the students brainstorm a list of symbols that could represent their classroom.
3. Challenge the students to create a flag could represent their class.
4. I like to have them sketch a rough draft first and then make a good copy on cloth using fabric markers.
5. The students then write a letter to the “Flag Committee” explaining the meaning between the symbols they have chosen.

**Summary:**

Have the students share their letters and flags with their classmates. Display the flags for the rest of the year.

**Materials Students Need:**

Paper for drafting  
Fabric rectangles  
Fabric markers

**Technology Utilized to Enhance Learning:**

The Alaska State Museum has an online exhibit about the flag that features multi-media clips that could be incorporated into the lesson. There is a 13 minute interview with Benny Benson that may be appropriate for older students. <http://www.museums.state.ak.us/eightstars/stars.html>

**Other Information:**

If you wanted to teach this lesson later in the school year, closer to Iditarod time, the students could design flags for:

- The race
- The musher they are tracking
- Their favorite lead dog
- An “unsung” hero of the race like the pilots, volunteers, or vets

**Modifications for Special Learners/ Enrichment Opportunities**

- Instead of working independently, students could work with teams to create a flag for their cooperative learning team.
- You could choose to have a contest to choose one official flag for the classroom.
- Young students could share their flags without the writing component, or be given more of a framework for their writing.
- This site, <http://museums.alaska.gov/eightstars/src/activities/primary1.pdf>, has picture cards that younger students could use to retell the story.

**Additional Information**