OBJECTIVES: After reading about and discussing the different physical environments in which United States communities can be located and cooperatively investigating the physical environment of one region of the United States, students will be able to:

1) Identify the five regions of the United States,
2) Describe variations in the physical environments of regions (including climate, landforms, natural resources, and ecosystems) by researching at least five facts about the environment of a particular region
3) Describe how people have modified the physical environment of a region and have adapted to live in it by drawing one conclusion about how people in a specific region of the United States live.

PA ACADEMIC STANDARDS:
- 7.1.3 B – Identify and locate places and regions.
- 7.2.3 A – Identify the physical characteristics of places and regions.
- 7.3.3 C – Identify the human characteristics of places and regions by their settlement characteristics.
- 7.4.3 A – Identify the impact of physical systems on people.
- 7.4.3 B – Identify the impacts of people on physical systems.

MATERIALS:
- Access to white board and markers
- Classroom map of the United States
- Scott Foresman social studies vocabulary cards
- Scott Foresman “Communities” Teacher’s Edition and Student textbooks
- Chart Paper and markers
- At least ten student laptops with wireless internet access
- Scott Foresman Student Atlases

PROCEDURE:

a) Anticipatory Set: Ask students what an “environment” is and what they know about it. Elicit that the environment of a place includes its landforms and climate and that people, animals, and plants all live in environments. (Use vocabulary cards if necessary to define “environment,” and “region,” Show students the classroom map of the United States. Locate Pennsylvania on the map. Ask students what the environment of Pennsylvania is like. Then figure out what part of the United States Pennsylvania is in using their knowledge of directions and maps (north, east, south, west, etc.). Explain that today we will be learning about the environments of other places and communities around the United States.

b) Practice: Read aloud pages 142-143 in the text. Review important terms and what a REGION is. Place on the board the words “West Region.” Explain that on the next page of the text we will learn about other regions of the United States.
Read pages 144 and 145 of the text, pointing out on the map the major geographic regions of the United States as students read about each one. Write the names of the regions on the board as students read about them. See if students can pick out major differences in the environment of each region as they read.

Read pages 146-147 of the text. Review the term “adapt” with students and discuss the ways that people change their environment to make it more livable. (If time permits, elicit ways in which Pennsylvania’s environment has been changed to allow us to live more easily.)

Now tell students that they will learn more about our country’s regions and their environments by doing some research. Place students in cooperative groups of mixed ability and allow them to complete the following activity:

1) Assign each group a state in a particular region to study (Nevada, Georgia, Illinois, Connecticut, Washington).
2) Allow students to use the website www.factmonster.com/states.html to research the physical environment and life in their particular state. Groups will have 15-20 minutes to find
   1) Two examples of animals that live in their state
   2) Two examples of plant life in their assigned state,
   3) Information about the weather of their state (average yearly rainfall, average high and low temperatures, and a conclusion drawn from these facts – is your state very dry, very wet, very cold, very hot, or in the middle?)
   4) One example of a landform in their state (students may also use student atlases to discuss this.)
3) As students find information, they should record it on chart paper, provided to each group. Each group should have a designated “recorder” who writes down information as his/her groupmates find it. Additionally, two students in each group will be assigned to look up information on the laptops, and another should use the Student Atlas. Duties may be changed as necessary, but each student should be given a SPECIFIC job to do.
4) At the end of the research period, students should present their findings to the class as time permits.
5) As a model of good work, a sample paper on the state of Pennsylvania may be presented to the class.

Before students begin, review proper procedures for using laptops and technology, as well as proper procedures for engaging in group work. Remind students of their focus and that any student not following directions will not be permitted to participate.
c) Closure: After students are finished working, share findings with the class. How are the environments of each region different? See if students can draw one conclusion about how people in each region of the U.S. live (e.g. “People in the Southwest must conserve water because there isn’t much there,” or “People in the Northeast must have clothing for warm summers and for cold winters.”) Congratulate students on their hard work.

ASSESSMENT: Chart papers may be collected and evaluated for depth of comprehension and for amount of effort exerted by groups.