Event Mapping
Grades 5 - 8
Big Ideas: Place, Change Over Time, Community

Education for Sustainability and Place-based learning begins with the idea that understanding our own place gives us a better understanding of the world. When teachers and students have cultivated a sense of place in our school and home communities, we begin to understand the interdependence and interactions of social, economic, and ecological factors.

Activity Description:
Event mapping can be used as a way to explore change over time, to identify living and nonliving things in a system, and as a way to connect to a specific “place.” During this learning experience each student will draw and record their experiences as an event map while they walk through a landscape. Students then share their maps with the rest of the class.

Essential Questions:
● What makes up your place? Who makes up your place?
● What is a community?

You will need:
Paper or student journals (if you use them)
Clipboard or cardboard to hold paper
Pencils
Optional: colored pencils, crayons, pastels, watercolors, compass

Time:
45-60 minutes not including travel time to and from the landscape
Before the Activity:
Identify a specific place; urban, neighborhood or natural landscape you would like your students to explore. Keep the following in mind:

a) Set physical boundaries. For example, “you can explore this section of the woods from the large glacial erratic and the fallen tree down to the edge of the pond.”
b) Check for hazards, i.e. sharp trash, broken structures, poison ivy.
c) Time for walking to and from the landscape.

Before you begin: “Today you are going to make an event map. An event map is a way to record your experiences in a special place. To make an event map, you will walk, stop, look, and record what you see, hear, feel and wonder. Think of how you use Facebook, Instagram or Snapchat to record special events in your life. On an event map you record the special things you notice about this landscape. An event map doesn’t have to be drawn to scale, and proportions don’t have to be accurate.”

Activity Instructions:

1. Prompt students to “tune into their senses” and record as they walk along. Let them know that “An event map doesn’t have to be drawn to scale so give yourself plenty of space on the page.”
2. Record whatever catches your attention as you walk along. Notice any changes in the terrain, look for hidden animals, and record how the landscape is shared by a wide variety of living and non-living things.
3. Recording may be done through sketches, writing, diagrams, symbols or any combination.
4. Label your event map with the date, time, place, weather or anything else that seems important to you.
5. When students have finished recording they may use a compass to draw a compass rose on their event map. (Optional)

Debrief and Reflection Questions:
Here are some sample questions to consider when engaging your class in the debrief discussion after they have completed their event maps.

- How are the living and nonliving things on your event map connected?
- Can living things share the same space?
• What would be different about this place in the winter or spring?
• What do you wonder about this place?
• How does this place make you feel?

Variations and Extensions:
• Students walk their “event map” during different times of day, seasons, or school semesters and compare the similarities and differences of the landscape.
• Try creating an event map in different places around the school campus such as: the playground, sidewalk, or field.
• Create a wall-sized event map of the landscape that incorporates work of individual students to give a big picture of experience. Use this map to look for trends and patterns in the system.
• Include digital photos as a part of your event map. The photos can then be posted to apps like iNaturalist.org or the “Nature’s Notebook” on the USA National Phenology Network.