Drop Your Pin!

Overview
Using a collaborative map, students share something about themselves and how their sense of place relates to what they're learning in class.

Objectives
Students will be able to:
- Locate a specific place on a Google map
- Drop and label a pin on a shared Google map
- Answer questions related to place-based learning

Background
A sense of place can help give students context. They can see how the actions in their neighborhoods affect their classmates' neighborhoods. They can see how a field trip location is connected to their home or watershed.

In this activity, the teacher asks students to label a place on a map that's important to them and then answer questions related to that place. It's important for the teacher to be conscious of what students feel comfortable sharing - students may not want to share their exact home or neighborhood with their classmates. But perhaps sharing a place that they've visited, a field trip location or somewhere they like to go would be more comfortable.

It's important for students to use the map to answer questions related to their place, such as:
- Why is this place important to you?
- What wildlife have you seen here?
- Where does the rain go after it falls on this place?
- Does water flow through this place from somewhere else?
Teacher Preparation

CREATE A COLLABORATIVE MAP USING GOOGLE MAPS

1. Go to Google Maps (http://maps.google.com). Login if you have a Google or gmail account. If you don’t, create an account.
2. Click “my places.”
3. Click “create map.”
4. Click on “Untitled” under Title and rename your map. Under Description, write a question or questions related to place that will be answered by each student.
5. Click on “Collaborate.” This will open a pop-up window with sharing settings. On the right, check “allow anyone to edit this map.” To share this map with students, either:
   a. Enter the email addresses for all students and press “send invitations.”
   b. Highlight the URL of the map, located under “Message” and copy it. Go to http://moourl.com and paste in the URL. Click “moo” to get a shortened version of the URL. Give this URL to students through email, a class website or by writing it on the board.

NOTE:

- To make the map “unlisted” (only someone with the URL can see it): Go to Google maps, login to your account, click on “my places,” click on the map, and click on “edit.” Under the title and description is “Privacy and sharing settings.” Select “Unlisted.” Then click “done” at the top.
Procedure

STUDENTS ADD TO THE COLLABORATIVE MAP.

1. Students Enter the URL for the collaborative map into their favorite browser.
2. Students sign in using a Google account.
3. Students find their home or the location you ask of them on the map.
4. Students click “Edit” located to the left of the map.
5. Students click on the placemark button.
6. They place this placemark on the specified location.
7. A description window will appear after the placemark has been set. Have the students enter their name as the title and enter their answer to the question(s) in the description box. (Students can add links, videos and photos here if they so choose.) When they have done that, click “ok.”

Note: A common problem is students will edit the Title and Description of the entire map and not the placemark they’ve set. This changes the Title and Description of the map for all the students, and may cause confusion. Make it very clear which box students should edit and be sure to give the students the question(s) in another format.

USING A HUMAN CONTINUUM, STUDENTS REFLECT ON THEIR SENSE OF PLACE.

1. Project the completed map at the front of the classroom. Have students line up in a spectrum related to their pins (i.e. northernmost to southernmost; inland to coastal; etc.).
2. Check students’ placement by clicking through the pins on the map.
3. Have students share the answer to one of the questions with the students standing nearby.
4. Have students line up in a spectrum based on a different classification and repeat steps 2-3 above. Do this multiple times until all of the questions have been discussed.