



SPEAK FOR THE TREES, Boston

TreeBoston.org | @Trees_Boston | trees@treeboston.org

Map Your Neighborhood

Grades: 7 - 12th

Setting: Indoors

Purpose of Lesson: Students will be able to learn about the importance of trees in urban environments, the history of and the socioeconomic and political decisions that led to communities being designated “environmental justice (EJ) communities,” and then use that information to think about how trees are distributed in their own communities.

Essential Questions:

1. What is tree equity?
2. How are trees beneficial?
3. How are trees distributed in my neighborhood?
4. Why are certain communities known as “EJ communities”?

Materials:

- Sketch paper
- Pens
- Colored Pencils
- Map of Boston

Program Session Schedule [~60 mins]:

Self Introduction & Group Check-ins: 5 mins

Icebreaker: 5 mins

Discussion of lesson topic: 30 mins

Activity: 20 mins

Review & Wrap-Up: 5 - 10 mins

Lesson Implementation

Self Introduction & Group-Check-ins (5 mins): Take this time to introduce ourselves and our organization. Who we are, what we do, and our goal for today’s lesson. Use this time to let the students share their names and grades as well.

Icebreaker (5 mins): Who is your favorite musical artist and what is your favorite tree?

Guided Discussion (30 mins):

1. Begin by discussing the importance of urban trees by highlighting some of the more important benefits of them. Be sure to engage students by asking a few questions along the way, such as:
 - a. What benefits of trees can you name?
 - b. Are there any you see here that hadn’t thought about prior to today?
 - c. Which of these are you still curious about?
 - d. Be sure to discuss the Urban Heat Island Effect, which occurs when cities replace natural land cover with dense concentrations of pavement, buildings, and other surfaces that absorb and retain heat.



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2. Discuss the importance of tree equity, and define that term as: ensuring that all communities, regardless of their socioeconomic status, have access to the benefits of trees. As urban residents, we recognize that more affluent neighborhoods have larger tree canopies and more environmental benefits, while historically marginalized communities are less canopied and do not see those same benefits.
3. Use the Tree Equity Maps to highlight the disparity in tree coverage in Boston neighborhoods and how that correlates to demographics and environmental outcomes that include:
 - a. Average temperatures
 - b. Low-income neighborhoods
 - c. Communities of color
4. Discuss the history of redlining and how that policy has not only led to negative environmental outcomes today, but how its legacy has persisted and continues to negatively impact communities of color.

Activity (20 mins):

Students will now have an opportunity to relate this information they have just discussed to their own communities. They will do so by drawing maps of their own communities to illustrate the canopy coverage - or lack thereof - of those areas. Students can choose to use their own street, another part of their neighborhood, or elsewhere, and have the choice to highlight either well- or low-canopied parts of the neighborhood.

Review & Wrap-Up (5 - 10 mins):

Students will now have an opportunity to briefly share their drawings to hear about their classmates' communities and further discuss the outcomes of bad social and environmental policy choices.