RAFT IDEAS

Topics: Time, graphing on one dimension

Materials List
- ✓ Paper register tape
- ✓ Ruler
- ✓ Pens, markers, crayons, and/or colored pencils

This activity can be used to teach:
- Timelines (CA Social Science Standards: Grades K-5, Chronology and Spatial Thinking, #1; Grades 6-8, Chronology and Spatial Thinking, #2)
- Number lines (CA Math Standards: Grades 4-7, Number Sense)
- Diagrams Presenting Data (Event Sequence) (CA Science Standards: Grades 4-7, Investigation and Experimentation)

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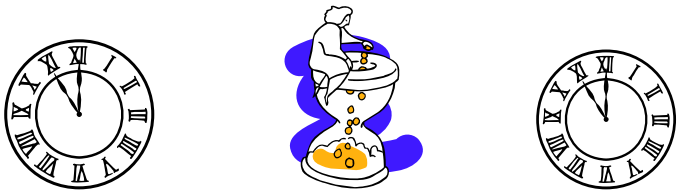
The Time of Your Life

Making Timelines from Personal Experiences



Timelines are used extensively in historical topics to give an impression of the relative positions of different events in time Examples include timelines of the Jurassic, Cretaceous, and Mesozoic periods, the existence times of fish, dinosaurs, mammals, and humans, the relative lifetimes of different music composers, wars and other historical events, and so on. In this activity, students create timelines to illustrate events in their own lives.

To Do and Notice

1. Direct students to label their personal timeline tapes with a scale that works out well. (If scale = 1 year/foot or 1 year/24 cm, each inch or 2 cm segment represents a month.) Students should begin at the year of their birth and continue to their current age. (Option: Use a scale of 1 cm or ½ inch per month to create shorter, more manageable, timelines. Depending on their levels, students could choose their own timeline scales.)
2. The student writes or draws specific events (birth, first day of school, getting a drivers' license, and so on) at the appropriate location on the tape relative to the year markings.
   (Option: Consider allowing students to graph the life of a fictitious character if they are uncomfortable or do not wish to graph their own lives for any reason.)

The Content Behind the Activity

How data is presented visually can make a great impact on how people understand and interpret events and scientific evidence, and can make the difference between people understanding or not understanding the implications of various types of information. For example, a simple graphic chart can reach people who would not be able to make connections between items on a written list in words. In fact, many people rely on graphics rather than reading the words at all. Placing events in their own lives on a timeline prepares students to interpret historical data represented in a timeline format.

Taking it Further

- Have students project into their future a couple of years and place events on the timeline that they believe will happen. (i.e. – If students are 14, they will probably expect to get a license in the next couple of years.)
- Have students add other events to their timelines, such as the election of a particular president, the year a certain movie came out, and so on.
- Have students create timelines for historical figures or events.

Resources

For a thorough discussion of presenting information visually, see books by Edward Tufte, such as *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information.*

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