

# School Notes: Students map their trek with GPS technology

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EASTHAMPTON - You've probably seen or heard of a Global Positioning System navigation device. Perhaps you own one.

GPS tools direct people from point A to point B in their cars. If you have one, you likely won't have to stop and ask for directions. Figuratively speaking, the GPS device rids those annoying bumps in the road.

Easthampton High School students, however, intentionally took a challenging path last week.

"We learned to map ourselves instead of just following a route," said Steve Small, a senior.

They picked the GPS device brain, learning about GPS technicalities and how a GPS receiver interacts with the Global Positioning System, a constellation of earth-orbiting satellites. In Nonotuck Park, students used GPS devices to spot points of interest along a trail. They recorded data with Westfield State College professor Carsten Braun, who was to return this week with the data students collected to create a map of their field trip. The maps were to be published online on Google Earth.

"What I thought was most interesting was the fact that we could use the devices to go out into an area that we really didn't know too well and create a map that we could use again and anybody could use," Small said.

Mary Rogers, who teaches computer technology at EHS, and Beth Callaghan, who teaches freshmen biology, worked with with Braun.

"It gave the students a college experience: working with a professor," said Rogers.

The two Easthampton High School teachers learned of Braun through his colleagues at Westfield State College, where they plan to take courses this year. Braun has completed research on glacier and climate change on Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, the Quelccaya Ice Cap in Peru, the Canadian High Arctic and in Venezuela. Rogers, who said she found Braun to be an excellent source of information for environmental and geographical issues, accepted Braun's offer to provide the students a lesson using the college's GPS devices. Students in both Callaghan and Rogers' classes covered about 2 square miles in Nonotuck Park, which Callaghan describe as an "amazing resource."

"It was an excellent opportunity for freshman to work with some juniors and seniors in another class and also for all of our students to be exposed to someone who has experience working with college students," she said. "It gives them a taste of what they can expect in college" using "real world applications."

Students seemingly received the lesson well.

"I thought it was a good experience," said Jared Post, 17. "You see stuff about GPS and how they're important in the world, but when you're out and using them it teaches you in a way that's different than reading about it."

Ronak Pandit, 17, owns a GPS device and uses it in his car. He plans to use it now to create his own maps, for off-road trips.

“If I’m going hiking or biking somewhere and I want to point out my adventures to someone ... I learned where to record and track that,” Pandit said.

### **White Brook calls for volunteers**

The White Brook Middle School annual magazine drive will be held through Oct. 21. This fundraiser contributes to field trips, guest speakers, school activities and assemblies. Volunteers are needed to help process orders during the evening or pass out prizes during the day. If you can spare the time, call the main office at 529-1530. White Brook has many volunteer opportunities on a regular basis and during special events. For more information, call the main office.

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