



Program Overview

Our days are broken into several different portions; the following is a summary of the activities and responsibilities of our educators. To get a better idea of the timing and frequency of these activities, please see the “Sample Schedules” on our educator employment page.

Field Group

School teachers divide their students into groups of twelve and each group is assigned a Nature’s Classroom (NC) educator. Field groups are the same for the length of the group’s stay and will spend several hours together each day. The field group portion of the day is a chance for students to explore, have fun, and learn in the outdoors. We want to help students create a connection to the natural world that includes an appreciation for the environment and a sense of responsibility for it. We cover a great deal of science as students learn about the amazing things on our properties. We also do team building activities during this time to help students develop self-confidence and interpersonal skills. Educators work with their field groups to create the curriculum each day. You want to probe the pond for aquatic plants, insects, and other animals? Great! You want to get lost and use orienteering skills to get back? Great! You want to practice some survival skill like wild edibles and fire building? Great!

Special Interest Classes

Our classes are either 60 or 90 minute periods where our educators choose a specific topic to teach and lead students in a hands-on activity to further illustrate the topic. Each teacher will lead a different class during each period; during one class block we can cover all the academic disciplines (math, science, social studies, arts, language arts, humanities, etc.). Students are introduced to the class offerings ahead of time and are able to choose to take a class that interests them. This gives students an opportunity to take ownership of their education and delve deeper into subjects of their choosing.

During a typical week, our educators will teach five different classes. We offer a great deal of freedom in what our educators teach and how they teach. We have over 600 existing lesson plans to choose from, or staff can create their own classes and activities. Because we work with students in different grades and in different school systems, the goals school teachers have for their students can differ. We work to meet their requests for classes that cover specific standards and topics, then we fill in the rest of the schedule with personal favorites.

Evening Activities

We have about a dozen different evening activities from which schools choose. Each night we present a different activity for roughly 90 minutes. Students are typically with their field groups for this portion, giving them another opportunity to bond and grow together. The topics that can be covered vary greatly and include science, team-building, cultural acceptance, social studies, and acting. Some of our most popular activities are: a science fair during which students learn about general science through demonstrations, a night experience where students explore nocturnal adaptations and how their senses work in the dark, and an Oregon Trail simulation in which students learn about Westward Expansion.

Quiet Sing

Our days are wrapped up with an opportunity for the entire group to come together as a community and sing a few songs before students go back to their living spaces with their chaperones. Our staff sit with the students and sing along with them while helping to keep them engaged. More musically inclined staff have the option to lead the songs. We have musicians of all types and skill levels in our Quiet Sing Bands- guitarists, banjo players, djembe and cajón players, keyboardists, classically trained singers - all musicians are welcome and encouraged to join.

Meals

Meals are served in our dining hall and are prepared by our kitchen staff. Because the entire group is together during this time, we need NC staff to assist in managing the students, as well as making sure the meal runs smoothly. Students take turns as “waitrons” who are in charge of their table for the meal. An NC educator is also assigned as the “head waitron” who arrives early to help the students set tables and prepare for the meal. During the meal NC and school staff sit with the students and help to instill good table manners and engage them in conversation. After everyone has had their fill, waitrons help to clear the tables and several NC staff assist in the dish room. While the dishes are being washed, the “head waitron” leads the groups in silly songs or entertaining challenges. There is also a short lesson that occurs pertaining to wasted food and resource use. Meal times are one of the few occasions where everyone is together and we take advantage of this by making them fun and lively.

Break Times

After almost everything we do, we have at least 30 minutes of break time to prepare for the next activity. This is a time to gather supplies, read through your lesson plan one final time, and take care of yourself- grab a cup of coffee, check your messages, sit outside quietly for a moment. Our hours may be long, but we do have plenty of breaks throughout and if you are using your time wisely and preparing early and often, you will have free time for yourself.

Meetings

We work closely as a staff, but because most of our activities are individual, we do not always have time throughout the day to check-in with one another. After program ends each night, we have a brief staff meeting to discuss how the day went and how we can improve for the next. Meetings are important for keeping communication lines open and sharing information. Our weeks with a final meeting to discuss feedback from the week and prepare for the next group.