

The Field Trip

Planning

The following is a planning checklist for teachers which will help prepare for the outdoor experience. Copy this page for each field trip, if needed.

You, as the teacher, are invited to step out of familiar surroundings to experience a *classroom without walls*. A trip into the forest or into other natural surroundings is a chance to study the environment first hand. The adventure can range from exploring a grove of trees in the schoolyard, to a day trip to a park, to an excursion into the wilderness area. The objective of this

adventure is to move students beyond the four walls of the classroom, to inspire creative learning into a more natural setting.

Exploring the outdoors can be intimidating for those unfamiliar with it, but by following a few steps, taking students into the outdoor classroom can be successful! In the outdoor classroom, always expect the unexpected. This can range from a torrential downpour to discussing big trees when banana slugs are running rampant! While all of these can be managed easily, a little pre-trip planning can help make the field trip a success.

Preparation

Below is a checklist of suggestions to prepare for the field trips.

- ☐ What is your reason for going? What will you be seeing and doing?
- ☐ Select the site that you wish to visit. Some sites you may need to visit prior to the field trip to become familiar with trails and the possible safety hazards.
- ☐ Each teacher should arrange with the site contact person in advance of the field experience to assure that all is ready when the students arrive. This information is contained in the Field Trip Site Information in Appendix A.
- ☐ Set up liability insurance through the school if the field trip is on private property.
- ☐ Select and contact parent volunteers. A good ratio is one adult to five students.
- ☐ Permission letters from parents will be needed. Take this opportunity to let parents know of any supplies that the students might require.
- ☐ Think of a back-up plan. This includes rain plans and alternatives in case of trip cancellation, as well as an emergency medical plan.
- ☐ Assess the students' knowledge using the KWL Worksheet.
- ☐ Prepare the students: each field trip has pre- and post-activities that can be completed in the classroom or at the school site. Completing these activities will enable the students to have background knowledge and vocabulary prior to experience for maximum learning opportunities. The post lessons will use the information experienced and apply it the grade level. The lessons are chosen to make explicit connections between classroom and field experiences, thus heightening comprehension.

Basic Rules

It is important to remember we are guests visiting the outdoors or a business facility. There are certain special rules we must follow:

- ☐ All living things, including plants, are to be respected and not injured in any way. The basic rule to follow is: **look, listen, and leave alone until instructed**.
- ☐ If it is necessary to handle an organism, be very gentle. Be aware that some animals might bite to protect themselves.
- ☐ Return all organisms to the spot they were found as soon as the observation is complete. This includes replacing their surrounding habitat as you found it. For example, if you found a slug under a leaf, put the slug back under that same leaf.
- ☐ Stay on the trail. If you stray off, you may accidentally destroy someone's habitat (home).
- ☐ Thank the host personally and remind the students to do the same. Also send a class "thank you" note or have each student write a note to the host and share what they learned or what they liked the best.

Things to Take on a Day Trip

For the Student:

- ☐ Appropriate clothing, including raingear, hat, jacket
- ☐ Proper footwear for walking that have a good tread
- ☐ Insect repellent and sun protection lotion
- ☐ Nature journals with attached pencil in a Ziploc bag
- ☐ Snacks and/or a lunch and a full water bottle
- ☐ Backpack

For the Teacher:

- ☐ First aid kit and someone who knows first aid
- ☐ Map, directions to site, site contact person telephone number
- ☐ Students' medications
- ☐ Original permission slips with medical information
- ☐ Emergency cards
- ☐ Class lists
- ☐ Group lists

- ☐ Name tags with markers in a Ziploc bag (name tags can be colored-coded to divide the students into smaller groups)
- ☐ Cell phone
- ☐ List of parent volunteers with cell phone numbers
- ☐ Whistle
- ☐ Binoculars and/or magnifying glasses
- ☐ Pocket knife
- ☐ Local field guides to look up animals, plants, trees, etc.
- ☐ Garbage bags—they make great rain gear or seats for wet days and for litter patrol
- ☐ Pencils
- ☐ Toilet paper with plastic bags
- ☐ A good story to read aloud during lunch time or on the bus (such as stories about forest ecosystems or local First Nations legends)
- ☐ Backpack with personal lunch, water, snacks, hat, sunscreen, jacket

Before Students Leave the Bus

- ☐ It is necessary to discuss with students before going outdoors the importance of appropriate outdoor behavior and to set ground rules.
- ☐ Set up a meeting signal to get everyone together once you are outside, such as raising your hand or using a whistle.
- ☐ Set boundaries and explain the importance of staying within them.
- ☐ Follow all directions. Make sure your directions are clear and that the students understand them.
- ☐ Stay with a buddy to keep from getting lost or separated.

Source:

Adapted from "The Outdoor Classroom," Sierra Club, www.sierraclub.org.