



## HELPFUL PROGRAM SUGGESTIONS

In preparing and developing this program since 2009, we have learned what is necessary to conduct an effective learning experience for students, especially when combining school classroom labs with outdoor field trip experiences. These helpful suggestions are designed to clarify details that help deliver this curriculum more effectively.

### Program Organization

1. **Getting Started/School Contact:** A connection with the school is important. Your organization may have parents or committee members who are passionate about fostering environmental stewardship in youth. Members that have been involved with schools will be able to help you get started and may be able to schedule a meeting with the school science teachers to discuss the program.
2. **Turn-Key Program:** Teachers today are extremely overloaded, so it may be difficult for them to envision adding anything new to their overburdened school calendar. However, the turn-key approach of this program removes additional teacher burden, so they are able to view the possibilities for their students and the value of this resource. In addition, the content is aligned with state and national science standards, helping teachers cover material while giving students hand-on experiences.
3. **Cooperative Effort:** Work to seek and maintain a cooperative relationship with an enthusiastic teacher, the school, and the lake association. Our lake association provides funds for field trip bus costs and also organizes the volunteers that teach the programs. This removes an important budgetary obstacle for the school. The teacher and school provide us with the opportunity to engage with students.
4. **Indoor Classroom Sessions Essential:** Be sure to incorporate classroom lab sessions. The indoor modules prepare the students for the outdoor labs and are essential for making the hands-on outdoor components successful. This preparation allows the students to become quickly engaged in the activities, resulting in a more positive learning experience and contributing to their depth and retention of learning.
5. **Local Organizations/Agencies/Colleges:** Involvement of local organizations like the county conservation departments, natural resources agencies, and local colleges enhances the program. These organizations typically have either outreach specialists or time budgeted for educating the public. They are very helpful and excited to share their expertise. **Important:** Be sure to get on their calendars early and have them be engaged in the planning from the early stages forward.
6. **Cameras as Educational Tools:** We provide cameras for the student groups to document their experience. We partner with the English language arts teacher to incorporate creative writing into the program. The photos provide an alternative journalism opportunity for those that may struggle with writing. The use of cameras can be pricey, but the added benefits of

being able to teach diversified skills means engaging students that may otherwise not have been reached. Be sure to remind students to take pictures during all the segments. It is helpful to start mentioning the photo aspect of the project in the classroom sessions to initiate this connection.

### **Field Trip Guidelines**

7. **Safety First:** Safety is paramount and must be incorporated in all facets of the program. Safety needs to be emphasized to the students and all participants by conducting safety overviews at the beginning of each segment. It is important that all participants in the program be given safety instructions. Students must wear PFD's (personal flotation devices) for all water and shoreline activities. All canoes must be visible from safety rescue boats during canoeing activities. NOTE: All adults and volunteers should be aware of the first aid kit and other safety equipment (cell phone) and these should be readily available. Additional Important Safety Concerns: Be aware of the legal occupancy requirements for pontoon boats, numbers of canoes available and sufficient PFD's (personal floatation devices). Remember to take these requirements into consideration when planning student rotations. Don't overlook student aides, instructors, boat drivers, or chaperones. All of these participants impact the total occupancy restrictions.
8. **Handicap Accessibility:** Students with disabilities should be taken into account when working with the school to provide access and inclusion in the program when possible.
9. **Itinerary:** Creating a workable and complete itinerary is extremely important. Be sure to include: destination address, bus driver directions, contact name and phone numbers, notes about proper clothing and water shoes, group breakouts, and detailed time increments- especially including school departure and estimated return time. See our templates for guidance. Work with the school for lunch arrangements. NOTE: Schools may require a plan displaying the student's productive use of time during the field trip. This is a key point on the itinerary, which should be turned into the school well in advance.
10. **Segment Rotation/Group Sizing:** Rotation planning is a critical piece of the LEEP program. The number of students and the duration of rotations are two important elements in the field trip planning. The purpose of the rotations is to break the student groups into workable sizes. The teacher can help with organizing the students into groups that will support their learning. If there are more than 36 students for a field trip, an alternative of running the field trip twice in the same day, (morning and afternoon) to create more manageable numbers is possible.
11. **Minimize Lecturing and Maximize Hands-on:** This is critical. In an immersion program the students become engaged by "doing". Indoor and outdoor hands-on activities are more effective than lecturing, which results in excellent engagement and retention by the students. These types of programs can springboard students into future interest in environmental stewardship and participation in outdoor activities. It is most effective to have segment leaders who are enthusiastic, knowledgeable, engaging hands-on instructors.

12. **Effective Student Aides:** High school students who can share their interest in environmental studies are good peer mentors. Additionally, the student aides assist in supervising and managing the students' behavior. Be sure to communicate this to the teacher so that they can select individuals who have enthusiasm for both the environment and working with kids.
13. **Canoeing:** The canoe training session prior to the field trip is essential to the student's successful and confident participation in the activities on the water during the field trips. Without pre-exposure to canoeing, the student's lack of skill creates a challenge and potential safety hazard. Based on the positive feedback from students, canoeing is now part of both our fall and spring programs, giving practice at three different time points. This improves canoe skill mastery, which promotes confidence, teamwork skills, fitness, and lake stewardship. NOTE: It is important to communicate to the teacher the benefit of pairing students according to weight and skill level to create the best canoeing experience possible for each student.
14. **Program 'Support' Cast:** Have plenty of supporting volunteers available to assist with details, e.g. helping with the activities, loading canoes, handing out and collecting materials, serving the snacks, etc. This backup support allows those leading the event to stay focused on the students and the teaching experience.
15. **Name Tags:** Make sure that everyone involved has a name tag. We provide the teacher with name tag stickers and markers for the students to put on while on the bus. We also provide name tags for all the volunteers that are helping each day. This is an important part of creating a feeling of community and personal investment in the students.
16. **Curricula and the Seasons:** Match the field trip labs to the calendar and the seasons. For example, there aren't many aquatic plants in the spring.
17. **Prepare for Inclement Weather:** Schedule backup days with all participants in the event of foul weather.
18. **Break Time:** The sponsoring organization should provide; water, snacks, waste/ recycle containers and port-o-lets for break time.
19. **Permission/Waiver forms:** When the teachers receive the program itinerary, they use that information to create permission and waiver forms. Be sure to get your itinerary to the school well in advance, to facilitate this procedure. Students are not allowed to participate without completed forms. Also send a photo release for students to sign in the event that you would like to provide a write-up for local newspaper or association newsletters.