

Middle Fork Watershed Stewards Leadership Development Program Instructors Guide

Leadership Development Program Overview

The Leadership Development Program is closely based on the Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council's *Middle Fork Watershed Stewards* program, Phase 5. The *Watershed Stewards* is a project-based watershed and restoration ecology curriculum for high school students. The curriculum includes a leadership development component that can be used alongside the restoration ecology curriculum, or as a stand-alone program. This Leadership Development Program has been designed to train high school students who are preparing to be counselors for 6th graders at Outdoor School in the spring.

The Leadership Development Program is made up of five 1.5-hour sessions. High school participants begin by learning about their own leadership styles and communication skills. Those skills are then applied to facilitator training techniques. Participants can use increased leadership confidence and practical facilitation skills to create a more meaningful experience for the students at Outdoor School.

Each session is made up of a teambuilding exercise, a facilitator competency, and an activity.

Teambuilding exercises require communication and creativity. They are a great way for participants to connect with their fellow counselors in a challenging (and fun) situation that requires new forms of communication and trust. Each team building activity is followed by a debrief, to elicit participants' thoughts on leadership styles and group dynamics. Through participating in the teambuilding exercises and debriefs themselves, participants will learn how to facilitate these experiences for the students at Outdoor School.

Facilitator competencies are the skills participants will need to lead students groups. They will learn the difference between a facilitator and a teacher, and the accompanying skills that facilitators and mentors use to lead groups effectively.

Activities at the end of each session give participants the opportunity to explore their skills and share knowledge with each other.

The Middle Fork Watershed Stewards and The Leadership Development Program were developed by Erika Coyer for the Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council. Contact her with any questions at Erika@mfwwc.org

Watershed Stewards Leadership Development Program

Session 1

1.1 Introductions

Time: 30 minutes

Overview: This is an opportunity for high school student participants to meet the adult facilitators, get a *brief* overview of the Outdoor School experience, and introduce themselves.

Instructions: Have a set of questions that everyone (facilitators and participants) answers that helps them get to know each other, and also gets folks thinking about their Outdoor School experience. For example:

1. Name
2. Favorite local outdoor spot and why
3. One thing they are looking forward to for Outdoor School

1.2 Team Building Activity: *Zen Counting*

Time: 15 minutes

Overview: Participants try the team-building activity *Zen Counting*, followed by a facilitator debrief.

Objective: For the entire group to count to a given number without communicating.

Equipment: blindfolds optional

Instructions: Have the group circle up on the ground and close their eyes. Explain that there will be no talking, gesturing, or communication of any kind. Only numbers may be said. Instruct the group that they must count to a designated number in order, without interrupting the other team members. Each person may only say one number. If two people speak at the same time, the count starts over. Have students sit more randomly (not in a circle) to make it more challenging.

Suggested Debrief Questions:

1. What was your first impulse when given the challenge?
2. What did you learn about your group? About yourself?
3. If you were to try this again, what might you do differently?

1.3 The Art of Debriefing

Time: 15 minutes

Overview: Participants learn the significance debriefing and some debriefing techniques

Debrief Guidelines:

The purpose of the debrief is to help the group process what they have done, look for lessons and transfer those lessons to daily life. Each debrief is unique depending on the experience of the group, and evolves depending on what participants share. Here are a few suggestions for getting the discussion started. The facilitator listens to participants reflections, then uses the ideas shared by participants to form new questions that elicit deeper responses from the individual or group, before moving on to the next question.

Sample Questions for Group Debriefing

What did you enjoy most about this activity?

What was your first impulse when given the challenge?

How did you feel when ... ?

What was the biggest challenge?

What were some of the questions that came up?

Did you consider more than one solution?

How did you go about including everyone?

What do you think about some of the other ideas that were tried?

If you were to try this again what might you do differently?

What did you learn about your group? About yourself?

How could you apply what you've learned to other areas of your life?

Team Debrief/ Reflection

How did our team involve everyone in solving the challenge?

Did our team use negative pressure or put-downs during the challenge?

Did we listen to one another and use ideas that we shared?

How many and which team members used praise phrases or positive encouragement?

What were some of the praise phrases used?

Individual Debrief/ Reflection:

How did you do today?

Participation:

1. I was a leader/ good listener
2. I listened and followed directions together
3. I fooled around until peers spoke up together
4. I fooled around the whole time/difficult today

Responsibility:

1. I did my part to help (leader)
2. I helped to make it work (follower)
3. I didn't help until the end
4. I made it difficult for the group

Interaction:

1. I listened and talked about all ideas
2. I talked about my ideas and listened
3. I heard an idea, not a good listener
4. I didn't pay attention

1.4 Learning Theories

Time: 30 minutes

Objective: Participants discover their own learning style and see how an understanding of diverse learning styles can help them be a more effective leader

Instructions: Read the overview of learning theories as a group, then give participants time to take the questionnaire and score it. Once all students have discovered what their learning style is, bring the group together for the discussion questions written at the end of the activity.

Note: If one style gets a much higher score than the others, there is a clearly dominant learning style. If two styles are scored very closely, that person has more than one style.

Learning Theories

Learning styles group common ways that people prefer to approach new information. Three basic learning styles are visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Everyone has a mix of learning styles. Some people may find that they have a dominant style of learning, with far less use of the other styles. Others may find that they use different styles in different circumstances. There is no right mix. Nor are your styles fixed. You can develop ability in less dominant styles, as well as further develop styles that you already use well. Knowing your preferred learning style can help you choose the learning techniques that work best for you. Awareness of learning styles can also help you realize why different people may approach the same situation in different ways. With any theory that categorizes people, the danger is that it labels people in limiting ways. When used appropriately, however, it can be a useful tool to better understand how you and others operate.

Learning Questionnaire

1. For each question, circle the one that best characterizes you, answering as honestly as possible with the description that applies to you right now.
 2. Count the number of a's, b's, and c's you circled and write the total in space provided
 3. The letter with the highest total represents your primary processing style/ how you learn. The letter with the second-most choices is your secondary style.
1. When I try to concentrate:
 - a. I grow distracted by clutter or movement, and I notice things around me other people don't notice
 - b. I get distracted by sounds, and I attempt to control the amount and type of noise around me
 - c. I become distracted by commotion, and I tend to retreat inside myself.
 2. When I visualize:
 - a. I see vivid, detailed pictures in my thoughts
 - b. I think in voices and sounds
 - c. I see images in my thoughts that involve movement
 3. When I talk with others:
 - a. I find it difficult to listen for very long
 - b. I enjoy listening, or I get impatient to talk myself
 - c. I gesture and communicate with my hands

4. When I contact people:

- a. I prefer face-to-face meetings
- b. I prefer speaking by telephone for serious conversations
- c. I prefer to interact while walking or participating in some activity

5. When I see an acquaintance:

- a. I forget names but remember faces, and I tend to replay where we met for the first time
- b. I know people's names and I can usually quote what we discussed
- c. I remember what we did together and I may almost "feel" out time together

6. When I relax

- a. I watch TV, see a play, visit an exhibit, or go to a movie
- b. I listen to the radio, play music, read, or talk with a friend
- c. I play sports, make crafts, or build something with my hands

7. When I read:

- a. I like descriptive examples and I may pause to imagine the scene
- b. I enjoy the narrative most and I can almost "hear" the characters talk
- c. I prefer action oriented stories, but I do not often read for pleasure

8. When I spell:

- a. I envision the word in my mind or imagine what the word looks like when written
- b. I sound out the word, sometimes aloud, and tend to recall rules about letter order
- c. I get a feel for the word by writing it out or pretending to type it

9. When I do something new:

- a. I seek out demonstrations, pictures, or diagrams
- b. I want verbal or written instructions, and to talk it over with someone else
- c. I jump right in to try it, keep trying, and try different approaches

10. When I assemble an object:

- a. I look at the picture first and then, maybe, read the directions
- b. I read the directions, or talk aloud as I work
- c. I usually ignore the directions and figure it out as I go along

11. When I interpret someone's mood:

- a. I examine facial expressions
- b. I rely on listening to tone of voice
- c. I notice their gestures and body position

12. When I teach other people:

- a. I show them
- b. I tell them, write it out, or ask them a series of questions
- c. I demonstrate how it is done and then ask them to try it

TOTALS:

a. _____ b. _____ c. _____
VISUAL AUDITORY KINESTHETIC

My Learning Style

My primary learning style is: _____

My secondary learning style is _____

Now that you know which learning style you rely on, you can boost your learning potential when working to learn more. The following suggestions can help you get more understanding:

VISUAL: If your primary learning style is visual, draw pictures in the margins, look at the graphics, and read the text that explains the graphics. Envision the topic or play a movie in your thoughts of how you'll act out the subject matter.

AUDITORY: If your primary learning style is auditory, listen to the words you read. Try to develop an internal conversation between you and the text. Don't be embarrassed to read aloud or talk through the information

TACTILE/ KINESTHETIC: If your primary learning style is tactile/ kinesthetic, use a highlighter to mark passages that are meaningful to you. Take notes, transferring the information you learn to the margins of the book, a notebook, or onto a computer. Doodle whatever comes to mind as you read. Hold the book in your hands instead of placing it on the table. Walk around as you read. Feel the words and ideas.

Another popular theory of learning styles is Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory. He defines 7 types of intelligence: linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, spatial-visual, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. To learn more about his theory and do a self assessment, go to <http://www.businessballs.com/howardgardnermultipleintelligences.htm>

Discussion Questions:

- What are your strongest skills and how can you set yourself up for success?
- Why is it important to have diverse teams of people working together on a project?
- How can a better understanding of other people's learning styles allow you to be a more effective leader?

1.5 Camp Songs!

Choose a song to learn each week at the end of the session

1.6 Homework: Mentorship Reflection

Introduce the concept of mentorship. Why is this an important role? Why do kids need mentors? How can a high school mentor have a different effect on a kid's life than a teacher, parent, etc? Do you remember when you were their age, a mentor that that had an effect on your life?

Think about a mentor you have had.

1. How did you meet that person?
2. In what ways did the mentor guide or influence you?
3. What impact did the mentor have on your life?

Students will pair up at the beginning of session 2 to share their mentor story with a partner. Feel free to do this activity at the end of session 1 if time permits, as session 2 is quite full.

Watershed Stewards Leadership Development Program

Session 2

2.1 Homework Discussion: Mentorship Reflection

Time: 10 minutes

Overview: Participants share their mentor story with a partner

Write the Mentorship Reflection questions (below) on the board to guide sharing. Have participants pair up and share their mentor story with a partner. Give each person 3 minutes to share.

Mentorship Reflection questions: Think about a mentor you have had. How did you meet that person? In what ways did the mentor guide or influence you? What impact did the mentor have on your life?

2.2 Team Building Activity: *Traffic Jam*

Time: 20 minutes

Overview: Participants try the team-building activity *Traffic Jam*, followed by a facilitator debrief.

Objective: For the people on the left to get into the same order on the right side (and vice versa)

Equipment: Enough place markers (mats or taped-down pieces of paper) for everyone in the group plus one extra.

Instructions: Set the markers up like this: >>>>_<<<<. The > and < represent people facing each other and the _ is a blank holder. One part of the group stands on the places to the left of the middle square, and the other part of the group stands on the spaces to the right of the middle square. Both groups are facing each other with the blank square in the middle. The goal is to get from ABCDE_12345 to 12345_ABCDE.

The following rules apply:

A person may not move backwards

You may not move around someone who is facing the same direction as you are.

No two people may move at once.

A person may only move to an open space.

A person may move over one player of the other side onto an empty space.

Debrief:

1. What was the most challenging aspect of this activity?
2. Did you consider more than one solution?
3. How did you go about including everyone's ideas?

2.3 Facilitator Competencies

Time: 45 minutes

Overview: Participants learn 4 basic facilitator competencies and develop skits to illustrate them

Instructions: Use the provided materials to give students a brief overview of what it means to be a facilitator, and the difference between facilitating and presenting.

Have students individually read over the 4 components of the facilitator job description, and put a smiley face next to the skills that they consider their strengths, and circle the ones that need more practice

- Establish a Safe and Comfortable Learning Environment
- Facilitate Participant Understanding
- Demonstrate Effective Delivery Skills
- Foster Group Participation

Divide students into four groups. Give each group 10 minutes to come up with a 2-minute skit that demonstrates one of the facilitator competencies. Encourage them to make it funny. They can even demonstrate what NOT to do. After each skit, have the other audience guess which specific skills were being demonstrated.

Facilitator Competency Discussion:

1. Which facilitator competencies do you feel familiar with and what has your experience been?
2. Which facilitator competencies do you want to focus on and why?
3. Were there any competencies that surprised you? Things that teachers and facilitators do "behind-the-scenes" that you were unaware of?
4. Why do you think effective questioning is such an important facilitator skill?

In your role as a counselor for the Outdoor School, you will have the opportunity to facilitate discussions and activities. Try to remember what it felt like to be in elementary school. How excited were you to go on field trips and be outside? How did you perceive the high school students in your community? As a mentor, you have the opportunity to work with students who are enthusiastic to participate, and who look up to you with awe and admiration. This sets the stage for you to play a meaningful role in their educational experience. And the good news is, you **don't** have to be an expert in Watershed Science, presenting expert knowledge. You **do** need to understand some of the basic skills that facilitators and mentors, use to create meaningful experiences.

Facilitating & mentoring vs. presenting

Facilitating & mentoring are...	Presenting is...
Asking and listening	Telling
Promoting greater awareness and discovery	Convincing others to think as I do
Assisting others to learn from their experiences	Transferring my knowledge and experience to others
Empowering, creating maturity	Creating dependency

The following is a facilitator job description. Think of it as a list of competencies to which a skilled facilitator aspires. You will see that a facilitator has a lot of factors to juggle. For a new facilitator, it may seem overwhelming, so start small. As you read the list, put a smiley face next to the competencies that you feel most confident about. Circle the ones you want to learn more about and practice. Start observing your teachers through the lens of facilitator, and observe how they exhibit some of these skills (or not!).

1. Establish a Safe and Comfortable Learning Environment

Show interest and enthusiasm...

- Greet participants personally and smile
- Introduce yourself, wear a name tag

Establish and uphold expectations

- Check with the class teacher about rules and expectations for the participants
- Confirm expectations with your students so they know what you expect
- Lead by example: be sure you are meeting the same expectations (respect, no gum, etc....)

Notice and respond to non-verbal cues

- Be observant and look for behaviors that may be a problem
- If participants look bored or confused, check to see if they're following you

2. Facilitate Participant Understanding

Give clear instructions

- When appropriate, write out specific instructions on the board
- If working in groups, wait to give instructions until participants are settled in their groups
- Provide an example of what is expected, if necessary
- Solicit questions to make sure everyone understands the instructions before starting the activity

Use appropriate language

- Use vocabulary appropriate to participants' background
- Avoid slang and inappropriate language

3. Demonstrate Effective Delivery Skills

Speak clearly and concisely

- Speak up so everyone can hear you
- Vary your pace and tone
- Speak in complete sentences

Demonstrate active listening skills

- Nod head to show understanding and encourage participants to continue
- Maintain eye contact with participants

4.Foster Group Participation

Provide Positive Feedback

- Use words of encouragement, like, "That's an interesting point," "I'm glad you brought that up."
- Clarify and build on ideas suggested by participants, such as, "As Jane mentioned earlier..."
- Smile!

Utilize a variety of learning and teaching techniques

- Remember visual, auditory, and kinesthetic preferences
- Vary learning activities to engage all participants

Use effective questioning

- Ask open-ended questions beginning with "how, where, when, which."
- After you have asked the questions, wait for an answer. Count to 10
- Encourage participants to share ideas, "Can you tell us more..."
- Use polling, "how many of you...?"

Manage levels of participation

- For *over-participation*-use a "parking lot"/list on the board for unrelated issues to address later
- For *under-participants*- call on participants by name, give think time prior to group discussion
- Use small groups, pairs, and trios to actively engage more participants

Discussion questions:

- 1.Which facilitator competencies do you feel familiar with and what has your experience been?
- 2.Which facilitator competencies do you want to focus on and why?
- 3.Were there any competencies that surprised you? Things that teachers and facilitators do "behind-the-scenes" that you were unaware of?
- 4.Why do you think effective questioning is such an important facilitator skill?

2.4 Mentoring 6th Graders Brainstorm

Time: 15 minutes

Overview: Get participants thinking about some challenges their 6th grade campers may present at outdoor school, and how to address them.

Instructions:

On the board or a flip chart, create two columns, labeled "challenges" and "solutions"

As a group, brainstorm a list of potential challenges they can anticipate the 6th graders presenting at outdoor school. (interpersonal issues, group management, staying focused, mealtimes, cabin times, etc) Record the list on the board. Then brainstorm potential solutions for each challenge. If time is short, each student can choose one or two challenges to consider for homework.

2.5 Camp Songs!

Choose a new song to learn this week!

Watershed Stewards Leadership Development Program

Session 3

3.1 Team Building Activity: *Group Juggle*

Time: 15 minutes

Overview: The group tries the team-building activity *Group Juggle*, followed by a debrief.

Objective: To see how many objects your group can collectively juggle at one time (for at least one complete rotation) &/or how quickly the group can move through a rotation.

Equipment: Soft balls or other objects

Instructions:

- Everyone in the group must participate in the juggling of each object.
- Participants cannot pass an object to a person directly beside them.
- Works best if the group establishes a passing pattern and maintains that pattern throughout the challenge.
- For the first juggling object, have a participant say the name of the person they are tossing to before they toss. This will help establish a pattern where the object is tossed in the same order of participants every time.
- Increase the challenge by continuing to add more juggling objects (always starting with the same person) or timing the group and trying to beat their best time.
- Variation: Group Juggle "Machine" – each player adopts a sound – beep, whoop, whee, yeow, pop, etc. – that they make every time they pass a ball.

3.2 Giving Clear Directions

Time: 45 minutes

Overview: Students practice giving directions and reflect on how to give directions more clearly

How to Tie a Shoelace Exercise

Instructor Note: have participants do this activity *before* looking at the tips for giving clear directions

Instructions:

- Have students grab paper and something to write with.
- Individually, take 5 minutes to write down instructions on how to tie a shoelace.
- In pairs, one person will read their instructions to the other person. If you are the reader, you must read the instructions *exactly* as you write them. If you are the listener, pretend you have no idea what you're doing and follow the instructions *exactly*.
- Be sure at least one person in each pair has shoes that tie.
- When you are finished, switch roles and repeat.

Discussion:

1. Does anyone want to share their set of directions and tell us how it went?
2. How would you improve your directions if you had to write them again?
3. Did anyone use numbered steps, clear language, or draw a diagram?
4. Sometimes it can be challenging to explain something we know really well to someone who is not familiar with it! How do you think this exercise applies to your ability to give directions to young students?
5. Empathy can be defined as putting yourself in another person's shoes. In what ways did you feel empathy for your partner trying to tie the shoe?

Tips on Giving Clear Directions

The basic procedure for giving good instructions is summed up in these simple steps:

- Share the purpose of the activity
- Let participants know how much time the activity should take
- Anticipate potential challenges participants may have and address them, when appropriate
- Break down the activity into the smallest, simplest tasks your audience will understand
- Place these tasks in chronological order
- Post instructions so participants can visually see them (on the board, handout, etc...)
- Get the participants attention before you give instructions
- Clearly describe each step, being specific and literal
- Provide examples where appropriate
- Consider asking a participants to repeat the instructions in their own words
- Ask if anyone has questions and be available to answer them

3.3 Native Plant Cards

Time: 30 minutes, plus additional time in future sessions

Overview: Students learn about native plants through creating a set of artistic cards that feature pictures and information about the native plants common to the area. The cards can be used in an activity with the 6th graders at Outdoor School.

Materials:

- Colored pencils or other artistic materials for drawing plants
- Card stock or poster board
- Field guides or other images of native plants
- List of native plants to focus on

Background: Native plants play an important role in ecological restoration. Native plants are part of what defines a habitat, and when they are absent, the quality of the habitat is severely affected. Reintroducing native plants into a habitat can help the ecosystem function better. They can provide food and shelter for native animals, improve water quality, and provide better habitat characteristics overall.

Land managers need to be able to easily identify native (and invasive) plants. When planning, implementing, and monitoring restoration projects, they observe what plants are present throughout the site.

Instructions: Work individually or in pairs. Choose one or two native plants from the list of species that are common at the Outdoor School site. The cards should be made of heavy paper, like card stock or poster board, and laminated when finished. One side of the card should feature a picture of the plant. Get creative. It can be a colorful drawing, a painting, or a simple sketch. You can draw the whole plant, or feature a set of specific parts, like the leaf and blossom. On the other side of the card, name the plant and write a few important facts (identifying features, its role in the ecosystem, etc). It can be in paragraph format or just bullet points.

When the Native Plant Cards are finished, each card will be presented to your group so that everyone can benefit from your expertise.

Mentorship Activity: Native Plants in the Field

At the site, find specimens of the native plants featured on the cards. Choose the most common native plants to share with the students. This may be more easily done before the students are with you.

Making teams: Create work teams so that there is one team for each plant you have chosen. Each team is made up of several high school mentors and a group of elementary students. In order to get a diversify the teams, use a creative technique for breaking into groups. An easy method is to have them count off, but instead of just saying 1, 2, 3, 4 and then having group 1, group 2, etc, you can have them count off by some set of well-known objects, like "river, salmon, bear, tree." The you have team river, team salmon, team bear, and team tree.

Each team will gather together, and mentors will present some information about the importance of native plants, as well as the chosen native plant. Use the picture on the card as a visual when describing the plant. Then, *staying together as a group*, allow the Rangers to look for that native plant. It may be useful to have some way to mark the location of the plant, like a ring of stones or sticks, or a flag, so it doesn't get overlooked or trampled. When all the teams have found their plant, you can do a native plant tour, where all teams rotate to each plant site. When everyone is gathered around a plant, have a Ranger use the Native Plant Card to teach their class about the native plant. Tour around the site until all the teams' plants have been featured.

The Native plant cards can also be used like flash cards. Once the students have learned how to identify the plants, they can be shown the picture on the front and see if they can name the plant and some of its distinguishing features. If there are pairs of each plant, the cards can be used like a memory game (which would require covering the writing on the back).

You may also choose to create Invasive Plant cards. The ability to identify invasive plants is equally important as the ability to identify native ones. The activity centered around invasive plants could include an introduction to the Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) program discussed in Phase 1. This gives students a context for the importance of learning to identify invasive plants. They can play an important role in forest health by reporting invasive sightings, helping to stop the spread of invasive weeds in our local forests!

Native Plant Cards Discussion:

What role do native plants play in their native habitat?

Why is it important to be able to identify native plants? Invasive Plants?

What are some of the characteristics that help you identify a plant?

3.4 Camp Songs!

Choose a new song to learn this week!

Watershed Stewards Leadership Development Program

Session 4

4.1 Team Building Activity: *Helium Stick*

Time: 15 minutes

Overview: The group tried the team-building activity *Helium Stick*, followed by a debrief

Objective: To work together as a group to lower the pole from a waist high position to the ground.

Equipment: One lightweight pole per group (5-10 feet long, a tent pole works well)

Instructions: Students begin facing each other with index fingers extended at waist height. Fingers should be alternated with group members standing opposite (zipper fashion). The pole is laid across the fingers lengthwise. Participants cannot touch the pole with any other part of their body and they must maintain the contact between their index finger and the bottom of the pole at all times. As the participants attempt to lower the pole to the ground while maintaining contact with the underside of the pole, the tendency will be for the pole to rise rather than lower.

Debrief:

- What happened at first?
- If needed, how was the group able to collectively change the course of action?
- Who took a leadership role, and in what way?
- How is this activity a metaphor for your role as a counselor at Outdoor School?

4.2 Facilitating Meaningful Discussions: Sense of Place

Time: 45 minutes

Overview: Participants reflect on a meaningful outdoor experience and learn to facilitate meaningful discussions with their students.

Instructions: Have participants read over the Sense of Place discussion questions. The questions are meant to spark stories and ideas, but do not necessarily need to all be answered. Participants can write notes, draft a story, or just reflect. When they are finished, ask them to share stories in pairs or small groups.

Sense of Place Discussion Questions

1. Describe an outdoor experience you have had in your local watershed that left a lasting impression on you.
2. Where were you?
3. Who were you with?
4. What did it look like?
5. How did you feel?
6. What was it about that experience that made it memorable?
7. How do experiences like this one foster a sense of connection with your surroundings?
8. How does that sense of connection lead to a sense of *stewardship*?
9. Why do you think it is important for people, especially youth, to have meaningful outdoor experiences?
10. Is there anything you can do to protect, maintain, or restore the conditions of the place you visited?

Facilitating meaningful discussions

As a counselor, you have a special opportunity to share your stories, listen to the students' stories, and make a lasting impression on the students. The 6th graders respect and admire the counselors. You are a mentor to them. During outdoor school, there will be opportunities to connect with students, on both an individual and group basis, and have meaningful conversations. Stay alert for opportunities to create these experiences. It may occur at mealtime, on a hike, or in the cabin.

Bed Time Rituals:

You may consider creating a bed time ritual that incorporates a time for reflection and sharing. Give the ritual a special name and do it at the same time every night, when the kids are all tucked into their beds and the lights are out. Light a candle or have a dim light. The Sense of Place Discussion above is one example. Start with a discussion question. It can be about something they saw or did that day, a connection with a friend or mentor, or anything that gets them thinking about a meaningful experience. Then ask a set of clarifying questions to help get their ideas flowing. You can share your own story first as a way to break the ice. Students listen quietly as you introduce the topic, then volunteer to share one at a time. While one student speaks, everyone else listens. When the student is finished, the counselor can thank them for speaking. This honors their willingness to share, and also lets the other students know that the next student can speak. It is important to create a culture of trust and respect, because it can feel vulnerable to share. If a student just wants to listen, and not share, that's ok.

Brainstorm!

With a partner, take 5 minutes to brainstorm a handful of meaningful discussion topics that could be useful for leading conversations in the cabin and beyond.

When everyone is finished, have each group share their top 3 topics to create a group list.

During Outdoor School, have some discussion ideas in mind. Also be on the lookout for meaningful experiences throughout the day that would lend themselves to good discussion topics.

4.3 Native Plant Cards

Time: 30 minutes

Overview: Finish creating Native Plant Cards. If there is interest, participants could also create Invasive Species Cards with a similar format.

While students are working on the cards, consider engaging them in conversations about Outdoor School...what to expect, etc, or give them a topic to discuss in small groups.

Laminate finished cards for use in the field.

4.4 Camp Songs!

Choose a new song to learn this week!

Watershed Stewards Leadership Development Program

Session 5

5.1 Team Building Activity: *Silent Line Up*

Time: 30 minutes

Overview: This activity is easier than some of the other team building activities the participants have done. It is a good activity for counselors to use with students at outdoor school, and can be a precursor to splitting kids into groups.

Objective: For the group to line up in a specific order without talking

Equipment: none

Instructions: The group must, without talking, line up in a specific order given by the leader (birth date, height, alphabetical by name, etc). For an added challenge, blindfold one or more of the participants.

Debrief: Invite participants to come up with debrief questions. If they need help, have them read over the list from session 1. Explain that this activity will be a good one for them to do with the students, and to have a few debrief questions in mind whenever they lead a teambuilding activity.

5.2 Group Management

Time: 30 minutes

Overview: Participants learn some transition games, songs, and attention getters to help them keep the kids engaged in between scheduled activities.

The days at outdoor school will be full with scheduled classes, mealtimes, and more. One of the counselors' important roles is to transition the students gracefully from one activity to the next. It's good to have a list of transition games, songs, and attention getters for these in between times. For some students, one of these little activities may be the most memorable thing from Outdoor School!

This list is meant to be added to. Do a group brainstorm and see what everyone's favorites are.

Quick Group Games:

- I spy
- Hand clapping games
- Bear Salmon Mosquito (like rock, paper, scissors)
- Telephone

- 2 truths and a lie
- Silent line up (choose a category...birthday/age, etc)

Attention Getters:

- Call and response (two words or phrases that go together...fish-hatchery, outdoor-school, Pleasant-Hill, etc)
- Call "1, 2, 3, eyes on me" Response "1, 2, eyes on you"
- If you can hear me... put your hand up, If you can hear me... clap once, If you can hear me... clap twice,etc
- Quiet Coyote, or some other hand sign that signals everyone to get quiet. (To make a quiet coyote, touch middle and ring finger to thumb, put pinky and pointer up for ears)

5.3 Wood Cookies

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: One wood cookie for each participant plus a few extra, sharpie markers etc.

Overview: Participants think about if they'd like to have a special counselor name, and design their wood cookie name tags.

Talk about ways the counselors can help lead the 6th graders when they make their own wood cookies.

Practice camp songs or discuss some other topic while students work

5.4 Camp Songs

Choose a new camp song to learn this week.

Generate a list of songs for students to refer to. Also have the students brainstorm possible skit ideas for camp fire.