



OVERVIEW OF NATURE'S CLASSROOM

Nature's Classroom offers a unique educational experience to students and their teachers. The goal of Nature's Classroom is to create a living-learning community that integrates the social development of that community with academic experiences. Common goals that are woven throughout the experience are for the student to improve his/her self-concept; to work together with others for the positive benefit of all members of the community; to recognize that the community is comprised of individuals with their own individual needs; to appreciate the individuality and uniqueness of each other; and to gain an understanding of what education can offer him/her. The process begins when teachers volunteer to bring their students to Nature's Classroom. Each Nature's Classroom program is developed in consultation with the classroom teachers in order to create an experience that is connected to the school's curriculum and goals.

The typical **daily schedule** at Nature's Classroom consists of a morning Field Group experience, two afternoon Special Interest class periods, and an evening activity. Meals and an evening snack are provided, and to close each day a Quiet Sing is presented.

The goal of the **Field Group** is for the student to understand and recognize the concept of dynamic equilibrium – constant upsetting influences being re-adjusted to maintain balance – in the natural world, in social interactions, and within him/herself. Each child is assigned by the classroom teacher to a Field Group and each group is assigned a single Nature's Classroom teacher. They focus on concepts and themes and their connection to the total life support system as they explore the natural environment. For example, the Field Group might examine producer, consumer, and decomposer concepts, predator-prey relationships or life cycles. The theme of "changes through time" may be an approach taken by a Field Group.

During the afternoon **Special Interest classes**, Nature's Classroom's academic environment, the emphasis is on learning motivation. The goals of the afternoon classes are for the student to choose the classes in which he/she is interested; to actively learn by doing; to understand and recognize the relationships between the major subject areas; to understand

the importance of goal setting and work toward an attainable goal; and to gain an understanding of the personal value he/she can gain from education. The classroom teachers may request particular classes be offered from our two volume set of lesson plans and/or allow our teachers to teach classes of special interest to them.

Evening activities may be done by the full community together or by the smaller Field Group. The activity's emphasis may be academic or social. Large group academic activities may include an Environmental Hearing, Alpha Beta, a Science Exposition, or Underground Railroad. The Environmental Hearing, set in a town meeting format, gives students a chance to role-play in a simulated hearing over land usage. Groups are assigned roles as representatives of corporations, public interest groups, local citizens, and conservationists. Each group expresses their opinions and viewpoints as they negotiate and seek support for their positions. The Science Expo provides students a chance to experience a variety of chemical and physical science demonstrations. Stopping at multiple stations staffed by Nature's Classroom teachers, students observe and assist in experiments and discuss the principles involved. An introductory explanation of the history of slavery in the United States sets the mood for the Underground Railroad role-playing activity. The students play the part of escaping slaves journeying to Canada under the guidance of an adult "conductor". Along the way they must evade the sheriff and his bounty-hunters, follow signs left by helpful abolitionists, and seek shelter in the local safe-house. A Folk Dance, a Mingle, or a Campfire are examples of social experiences. A Night Hike, with a focus on astronomy and vision, may be taken by the Field Group. Not all of these activities are done consistently at every site. Working with the Nature's Classroom Program Coordinator, classroom teachers can select those activities which best suit the goals they have for their students.

What the students learn in relation to community awareness and group cohesiveness in Field Groups and classes is applied in other activities. Mealtimes provide a chance to interact and to share experiences with others. The diversity within Field Groups, classes, and other activities facilitates conversation among the students and adults allowing them to share their excitement. To be of service to the community, students take on the responsibility of helping as waiters.

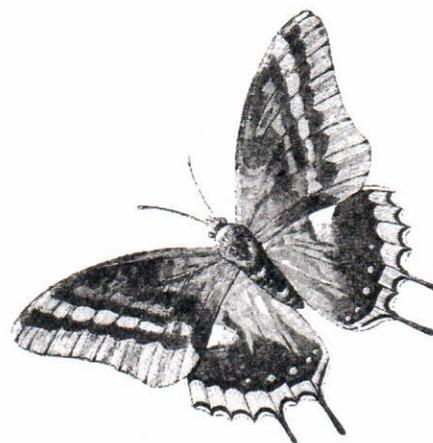
The Nature's Classroom teaching staff is composed of individuals with a minimum of a bachelor's degree. We maintain a teacher to student ratio of one to twelve or less. There is a nurse, EMT, or medical person on-site or on call at all times. The children are provided with 24-hour adult supervision. The responsibilities for supervision are shared by the classroom teachers and the Nature's Classroom staff.

Having spent a week at Nature's Classroom, living and learning together, students develop a sense of community, a confidence in themselves, and an appreciation for others that carries over to the school community. They see their classroom teacher as a person and friend in the learning process. The strengthened peer cooperation and expanded student-teacher relationships have an influence on the cognitive growth of the students throughout the school year. Together, they return to the classroom united through this shared experience to achieve the common goal of the pursuit of knowledge.

Sample Basic Schedule

First Day

- 11:00 Arrival & Settling In
- 12:00 Lunch
- Orientation
- Field Experience
- 4:00 Special Interests
- 6:00 Dinner
- 7:30 Quest
- Sing Down
- 9:00 Snacks
- 9:15 Quiet Sing



Second Day

- 7:15 Rise and Shine!
- 8:00 Breakfast & Clean Up
- 9:30 Field Experience
- 12:00 Lunch
- Free Time
- New Games
- 2:00 Special Interests
- 4:00 Special Interests
- 6:00 Dinner and Free Time
- 7:30 Night Walk
- 9:00 Snacks
- 9:15 Quiet Sing



Third Day

- 7:15 Up and At 'Em
- 8:00 Breakfast
- Final Clean Up
- Scavenger Hunt/
Field Experience
- Evaluation
- 12:00 Lunch
- Departure

Sample of Special Interest Programming

The two volume curriculum text for **Nature's Classroom**, *AND THIS OUR LIFE*, and its unpublished appendices contain over 500 hands-on science, math, humanities, and social studies lesson plans with follow-up activities for use in the schoolroom as well as references for further investigation.

FIRST CLASS

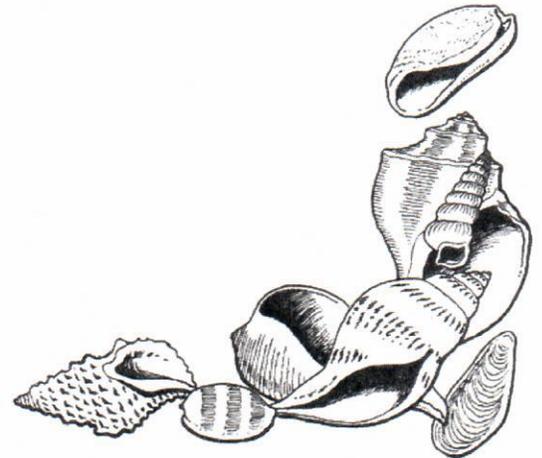
- SC Double Bubble (Chemistry of Soap)
Just Plane Fun (Flight and Aerodynamics)
Jelly-Belliology (Taxonomy)
Incredible Edibles (Edible Plants)
- MA Geodome (Geodesic Dome Construction)
Get Lost (Map and Compass, Orienting)
- HM Feed Your Face (Natural Cosmetics)
- SS The Oil Game (Sharing a Limited Resource)
Revolution (Historical Simulation)

SECOND CLASS

- SC Go with the Flow (Heart and Blood)
Terrarium Construction (Cycles)
Egg Drop (Package Design)
Go Fly a Kite (Wind, Atmosphere)
- MA Countryside Measuring (Geometry)
Up and Away (Hot Air Balloons)
- HM On the Air (Radio Broadcast Writing)
- SS Native American Games
It's the Law (Criminal Justice)

THIRD CLASS

- SC Crystals (Chemistry)
Hot Air Balloons (Air)
Pollution Solution
Oh Rats! (Dissection)
- MA Polling (Graphs)
Speed Boats (Stream Power)
- HM Woods Words (Poetry)
- SS Egg Babies (Responsibility)
Dyeing Naturally (Dyes)



The preceding is a **SAMPLE** outline of courses for a group size requiring nine of our instructors. The specific courses offered vary with the time of year, location, current **Nature's Classroom** instructors, and goals the visiting school wishes to achieve.

SC: Science

MA: Math

HM: Humanities

SS: Social Studies