

## DEAR PARENTS,

Your child will soon have an opportunity to participate in a residential outdoor school program. This letter attempts to answer some of the questions parents usually ask. Please feel free to ask us about any other concerns you may have about the program. Outdoor environmental education uses the out-of-doors for learning experiences that cannot easily take place in the classroom. Students and teachers learning outdoor awareness in this extended classroom can use the experience to help in their understanding of the natural environment, their school subjects, and the way people live. The program includes activities such as examining life in lakes and swamps, investigating weather, Colonial and Native American skills, and confidence building group challenges. A variety of field walks, classes in all subjects, and evening activities insure an exciting, stimulating experience.

**SUPERVISION AND STAFF:** Students are supervised 24 hours a day. In addition to the classroom teachers and chaperones accompanying each visiting group, Nature's Classroom has a permanent staff residing on site consisting of a director, environmental teachers on 1:12 ratio, and a nurse, EMT or health staff person on call at all times.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY:** There is no requirement that students undergo a medical examination before attending Nature's Classroom. The program is physically intensive, however, and you may wish to consult your physician if there are any concerns that should be brought to the attention of the staff. Such guidance will assist them in planning the program of activities with the students. Please note any special health concerns on the Nature's Classroom medical forms. The forms **must** be completed before a student can attend. Health and safety are our most important objectives! A fully staffed and equipped hospital is less than 30 minutes away from all of our facilities. Every student is covered by insurance while attending the program.

**CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT:** A clothing and equipment checklist is furnished. Particular care should be taken in supplying ample footwear and pants, as students frequently participate in activities in wet areas. Clothes should be chosen for comfort and durability, rather than style. Please add or delete items appropriate for the season (gloves, hats, parkas, etc.)

**FOOD AND LODGING:** Meals are prepared by a permanent cooking staff and are served family style. Special dietary needs should be noted on the medical forms. Students, visiting teachers, and chaperones are lodged in winterized dormitories and cabins. Parents are welcome to visit any of our Environmental Education Centers and to view the facilities; such visits, however, should be made before or after your child's experience, preferably midweek. The physical facilities are always open, so a weekend visit might be possible. You must call the site and make an appointment with the Program Coordinator before coming.

**TELEPHONE:** The telephone is **not** available for the students' use, and parents are asked not to call students **except in case of an emergency**. The Nature's Classroom telephone number is 860-379-7682.

**MAIL:** Mail is most appreciated by students, but to be safe, allow **4 days** for delivery. Mail posted midweek may not reach Nature's Classroom until Friday after the group has left (please make sure there is a return address in case we need to send it back). Please include the name of both the student and the school to assist delivery. Mail should be sent to **Nature's Classroom, Box 8, Colebrook, CT 06021**.



## 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 Back to Basics. 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. Back to Basic teaches students about Colonial and Native American crafts. 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 schoolcommunity. 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.

## Nature's Classroom Fee Schedule

We are excited that you will be sending your child to Nature's Classroom. It is a rewarding, fun, and valuable experience that they will remember fondly. Below you will find the payment schedule.

Total payment can be made up front, or installments can be made by the given dates.

Credit card payments can be processed AT MCCPS (no online payments can be accepted). Each credit card payment will be charged a \$2.50 processing fee.

Any questions can be directed to the 6th Grade team.

Total cost: \$450.00

11/30/17: \$150.00

1/3/18: \$150.00

3/30/18: \$150



# Sample Basic Schedule

## Monday

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

## Tuesday

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

## Wednesday

7:15 Good Morning!  
8:00 Breakfast & Clean Up  
9:30 All Day Ocean/Historical  
Mountain Field Experience  
(or same as Tuesday)  
6:00 Dinner and Free Time  
7:30 Underground Railroad  
9:00 Snacks  
9:15 Quiet Sing

## Thursday

7:15 Wake Up!!!  
8:00 Breakfast & Clean Up  
9:30 Field Experience  
12:00 Lunch  
Free Time  
2:00 Special Interests  
4:00 Special Interests  
6:00 Dinner and Free Time  
7:30 Thursday Night Life  
9:00 Snacks  
9:15 Quiet Sing

## Friday

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.

## 4 P.M. MONDAY

- 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)

## 2 P.M. TUESDAY

- 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)

## 4 P.M. TUESDAY

- SC Fruit Lab (Fruit Dissection)  
Marshmallow Meiosis (Genetics)  
Rock-n-Roll (Geology)  
Weather or Not (Meteorology)
- MA Hang in There (Suspension Bridge)
- HM Gum of Your Business (Sales and Marketing)  
Mime in Nature (Drama)
- SS I'm OK, You're OK (Exploring Handicaps)  
Trial of the Lorax (Values Clarification)

## 2 P.M. THURSDAY

- 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)

## 4 P.M. THURSDAY

- SC Owl Pellets (Owl Study)  
Chemistry Magic  
Pond Probe (Ponds)  
Volcano
- MA Pulleys
- HM Hear Ye (Newspaper)  
Sensory Walk
- SS Dream Catchers (Native American Culture)  
Alpha/Beta (Cultural Differences)

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**



# NATURE'S CLASSROOM STUDENT REGISTRATION

Please print all information and please fill in all the blanks

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_  
(Last) (First)

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Weight \_\_\_\_\_ Height \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
(No. and Street) (Town) (State) (Zip)

Parent's Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Home Telephone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Alternate Telephone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Family Physician \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

I give permission for (Name) \_\_\_\_\_ to attend Nature's Classroom

for the period of \_\_\_\_\_ as part of the outdoor education program

of (School Name) \_\_\_\_\_ . I understand that the director of Nature's Classroom may, if necessary, for my child's health, have him/her hospitalized or use outside medical, surgical, or dental care. I also understand that the director and/or school leaders may dismiss my child from Nature's Classroom if, in their opinions, his/her conduct or influence is not in the best interest of the entire group. No refund is given if such action is taken for discipline reasons. Nature's Classroom has my permission to use my child's image, voice and/or likeness for promotional purposes.

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

## MEDICAL PERMISSION SLIP

Should your child become ill, get a headache, catch a cold or have other minor medical or dental problems, do you give permission for the administration of basic first aid at the discretions of the Nature's Classroom staff?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

If Ibuprofen or Tylenol needs to be administered, do you prefer:

IBUPROFEN \_\_\_\_\_ TYLENOL \_\_\_\_\_ OTHER (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_



# Nature's Classroom

## HOME AND HEALTH INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Session: \_\_\_\_\_

*The questions below are provided to give you a framework within which to provide that needed information to us. Please feel free to add whatever information you think will be helpful – attach additional sheets if necessary. We will share this information with your child's classroom teachers prior to his/her arrival at camp. Thank you for your cooperation.*

1. Is this your child's first prolonged stay away from home? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Is this your child's first sleep away experience? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Has your child ever had a problem with homesickness? If yes, please explain briefly. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Does your child have a bed wetting problem? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Date of last tetanus booster shot (not a tetanus shot given after an injury). \_\_\_\_\_

6. Are there any restrictions on your child's activities? Please include any special health concerns, e.g., special diet, recent hospitalizations, fractured bones, etc.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. List any allergies, e.g., food, environmental, medication, and explain degrees of severity and current treatment.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Does your child have any sensory, physical or cognitive disabilities?  Yes  No If yes, explain.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Has anything happened recently in your child's life that may affect him/her emotionally or physically while at camp? If yes, please explain.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. Additional information:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# Nature's Classroom

## MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION FORM

**All medications (including prescription, non-prescription and vitamins) must come in original containers.**

Please complete *all parts* of the following chart for all medications being sent or the medication cannot be administered. If more than four medications are needed, please copy this page.

CHILD'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

*I hereby give permission for the staff of Nature's Classroom to administer to my child the following medication(s):*

Medication	Dose (mg, tsp)	Time Medication Taken				
		Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Bed	Other

Comments (reason for taking medications, special considerations): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Your child will not be allowed to keep any medication in his/her cabin. Prescribed medications must be in original container with pharmacy label containing Rx number, the name of the medication, the dosage, directions for administration, and the child's name. Whenever possible, a copy of the doctor's prescription or letter may be sent to clarify any discrepancies. All non-prescription medication must be in their original containers, clearly labeled with the child's name, name of the medication and direction for use.*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_





## SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT LIST FOR NATURE'S CLASSROOM

This list is for a five day program and dependent upon *seasonal weather*. Plan for everything!

- Water Bottle** \*\*\* Super important!
- 1 Sleeping bag or bedroll (sheets and blanket)
- 1 Pillow and pillowcase
- 5 Pairs of jeans/pants
- Multiple shirts (short and long sleeve)
- 1 Sweatshirt/hoodie or sweater
- Pajamas
- 1 Pair of slippers/flip-flops for cabin
- Shorts for cabin use only
- Many changes of underwear (for 5 days at least 8)
- Multiple pairs of socks (at least 2 per day)
- 1 Warm jacket/coat
- Hat(s): warm hat and/or ball cap
- Gloves, scarf
- Shoes (2-3 Pairs): old sneakers, rain boots, well-broken-in hiking boots, etc.
- 1 Raincoat or poncho
- Toiletries: soap (and container), shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrush, deodorant, towels, washcloths
- Laundry bag or extra pillow case
- Pre-addressed stamped envelopes or postcards, paper and pens, etc. for writing home

- Notebook(s) and writing utensils
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent (no aerosols please)
- "Day pack" or backpack
- Camera: preferably disposable
- Flashlight (optional)
- Book for reading at night
- Deck of playing cards (optional)



### DO NOT SEND:

- Electronics: cell phones, I-pods, MP3 players, portable gaming systems, kindles, nooks, tablets, etc.
- Pocket knife, candy/gum/food

\*\*\*Please do NOT buy new clothes or shoes for your child to wear at Nature's Classroom. Send old clothes that you do not mind your child getting dirty during outdoor activities.

\*\*\*Please make sure that every personal item (shoes, camera, socks, etc.) are clearly labeled with your child's name. Sharpie everything!

\*\*\*If your child loses any items at Nature's Classroom, contact the Program Coordinator immediately. NATURE'S CLASSROOM TAKES NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR LOST ITEMS.

