

Bringing Outdoor Experiences to YOUR Small Rural Elementary School

By: Carolyn Cruso OISD Outdoor Experience Coordinator and
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Orcas Island School District

March 2024

Introductions...

- Carolyn Cruso

- Major in Environmental Science, Minor Botany from U. of New Hampshire
- Interned at NH Science Center
- Trained and taught at Massachusetts Audubon Wellfleet Bay Sanctuary
- Taught at Moran State Park Environmental Learning Center
- Homeschool Outdoor Ecology Classes on Orcas Island

- Lorena Stankevich

- In education since 1991
- Spouse - Camp Director for the YMCA, 1990-2019
- Moved to Orcas Island in 2005
- Master's in Educational Leadership from San Francisco University
- National Board Certified Teacher
- OCDE Project GLAD Trainer
- Principal 2016-present

Our Journey...

- **Prior to the 2022-23 School year**
 - Pieced together funding
 - Teachers did field trips out and around Orcas Island as often as possible - Teachers coordinated and pulled together Volunteers
 - 2018-19 - Kindergarten began going out most Wednesdays to “play in the woods” - Used YMCA Camp Orkila - purchased outdoor suits
 - 2019-20 - Added outdoor experiences to 1st and 2nd grade - purchased rain pants and ponchos
 - COVID - 2020-21 - One day each each in the Woods - a Collaborative with Camp Orkila

Our Journey

- **Purpose**

- To provide integrated outdoor experiences for elementary students that are connected to Orcas Island, the Salish Sea, and integrated into the curriculum being studied in the classroom and to increased student stewardship of our natural ecosystems.
 - Aligned to the NGS Standards
 - Enhancing our science program - STEM/STEAM
 - Improving student achievement on annual WA State Science Assessment for 5th grade



Our Journey

- **2022-23 School Year**

- Recruit and Hire the Coordinators - (4 part time people)
- Establish available sites through collaboration with local agencies
 - Sites need bathrooms and options for fire
- Create a Program Structure
- Recruit, Hire and Train Naturalists
- Establish an aligned K-5 program
 - Integration of outdoor experiences, NGS standards, Amplify/FOSS science kits, CKLA, GLAD units
- **Collaborate with Teachers - a Connection to the Classroom**



the **SAN JUAN
PRESERVATION
TRUST**



Camp Four Winds

Moran State Park

**San Juan
County
Conservation
Land Bank**

Westcott Family Farm

Our Journey

- **Program Structure**

- **Kinder**

- 13-14 Trips - 6 of the trips include program from Coordinator and 3 Naturalists
 - Leave school at 10
 - Leave site at 1 to return to school

- **1st and 2nd Grades**

- 6 Trips (Each trip uses a Coordinator and 3 Naturalists)
 - Leave school at 8:45
 - Leave site at 12:30 to return to school

- **3rd-5th Grades**

- 6 Trips (Each trip uses a Coordinator and 3 Naturalists)
 - Leave School at 9:00 to arrive at Site by 9:15
 - Leave Site at 2:45 to return to school by 3:00

Our Journey

- A Basic Day
 - Welcome
 - Statement of Theme and Purpose for the Day
 - Introduce Staff
 - Quick Review Basic Expectations- 3 RESPECTS
 - Group Game
 - Rotation 1
 - Rotation 2
 - Lunch - Free Exploration
 - Rotation 3
 - Wrap Up Circle





Our Journey

- **Coordinating with Classrooms**
 - Regular time to Check In - Reflect and Collaborate is CRITICAL
 - Connection to the Classroom
- **Logistics**
 - First Aid Kits
 - Sack Lunches (from Home or School)
 - Pack out Waste
 - Class morning Snack
 - At least 3 Parent Volunteers
 - Handbook
 - Emergency Procedures (See next Slide)
 - Coordination with School Nurse, Office Manager and Principal
 - Chain of Command - Teacher then Coordinator, then Naturalists and Parent Volunteers

Emergency Procedure Protocol - laminated Cards with the following:

- Teacher/Coordinator - make the decision
- Calling 911 first or Office First (provide office manager and principal cell #s)
- The office will contact the parent
- Naturalists and parent volunteers remove students from the situation and supervise, within the area
- Communicate to Students: Emergency “Student Need to Know”
Appropriateness
- No reception - send an adult to quickly get in an area for reception:
incident details: child age/gender, what happened, location

Weather Protocols

- Text between Coordinators/Teachers/Principal to make a decision regarding weather and the outdoor experience
- Teacher/Principal - They will contact: Bus, Food Service, Office, Parents



Curriculum

- Experiential Relationship with the Natural Ecosystem
 - Education Based
- Sensory Awareness and Building Observational Skills
- Moving into Interpretation of Collected Data, Scientific Method and Analysis
- Modeled on existing programs and methods
- Fun, Exploratory, Physical, Awakening Wonder, Cultivating a Sense of Place and Stewardship
 - Free Play
- [Link to 3rd-5th](#)
- Link to 1st-2nd

Annual Class Focus by Grades (OIES Outdoor Experiences)

	CKLA standards	September	October	November	(December)	(January)	February	March
Kindergarten	N/A							
Grade 1	Geology, interactions and relationships between animals and plants		Bats	Habitat-Forrest and Freshwater			Trees- ID of common trees; ;tree rings to measure trees	Geology- Soils; BIF
Grade 2	historical focus geography, geology, interactions and relationships; Cycles in nature		Life cycle of trees (Apple trees)	Food Cycles and Food Webs			Tides and intertidal creatures	Lime Kiln History

Annual Class Focus by Grades (OIES Outdoor Experiences)

	April	May	June
Kindergarten			
Grade 1	Aquatic life	Survival/ Camouflage	
Grade 2	Insects, plants and pollinators	Birds non-verbal communication	

[Document Link](#)

Still a work in progress - Goal to be finished by the end of this year.

Curriculum

- Sample Lesson from 1st-2nd
Trees - Grade 1



Curriculum

- Sample Lesson from 3rd-5th
Soils



Bringing Experts to Work with Students



Naturalist Training

- Annual Training
- Naturalist development
 - Experiential Education techniques
 - Modeling teaching of actual classes
 - Outdoor classroom management
 - Integrating Next Generation Science standards
- Develop familiarity with school culture
- Cultivating community and trust amongst naturalists

Off Campus Outdoor Experiences

Be Safe	Be Respectful	Be Responsible	Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Students should always be able to see an adult -Stay with the group -Keep hands, feet and objects to self -Use all equipment and materials appropriately -Students stay in designated areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Follow ALL adult directions -Respect the place, the wildlife and plants -Clean up after yourself -Pick up and carry out all garbage, including lunch leftovers -Use kind words and actions -Listen to your naturalist and your fellow students; respect what they have to say and contribute your own ideas -Use appropriate tone, voice ,volume and language -Wait for your turn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Be honest -Take care of personal belongings -Help others when needed -Being good ambassadors for our schools - being your best self -Remind others to follow school rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Reteach/Redirect/ practice expectations -Reinforce positive behavior -Give the student a second chance before further action -Ask student with issues to sit/stand next to adult -Close proximity time out <p>If issues are continuing, seek immediate teacher input...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Loss of Privilege -Time Out -Increased Supervision -Assigned to be with the Teacher -Parent Contact

Regarding the Matrix, Thoughts for the Adults...

- The adult leader should always be able to see ALL students in their group

Teachers:

- Review and TEACH Outdoor Behavior Guidelines during class time once or twice BEFORE all trips
- Enlist parent volunteers and provide them with the outdoor volunteer handbook
- Check Out First Aid Kits
- Provide backup and behavior management for Naturalists as needed during the trip

Naturalists:

- Set the tone at the beginning of every lesson
- Explain what we are doing and why? Give a brief overview of what's happening
- Assure that the conversation between staff is supportive
- Be aware of confidentiality
- Assume the best

Naturalist Training - Shared with Parents in the Newsletter

Outdoor Experiences Training

Saturday, March 18; Thanks to a potentially ongoing grant opportunity from OSPI, teachers, naturalists and folks from several organizations: Kwaht, Moran State Park, Camp Four Winds, San Juan Preservation Trust and Land Bank came together to begin developing the elementary outdoor experiences program for the next several years. This program has been the brainchild of Ms. Mandy Randolph and began about 5 years ago, before COVID, with Wednesday in the Woods and the Mossy Mondays. These experience are one part of our science program and are designed to meet the national next generation science standards; be integrated into the classroom and our new Core Knowledge Language Arts curriculum; and engage our students through meaningful experiences around Orcas Island.

Some organizations were not able to join. Check out our Elementary Website "home page" for all the organizations involved in this movement



Outdoor Experiences Training



Video Clip - Naturalists Training



We want our K-5 students learning about where they live, ultimately developing a passion for the San Juan Islands and our Salish Sea, so they are ready to embrace and care for this region through stewardship.

Parent Volunteers

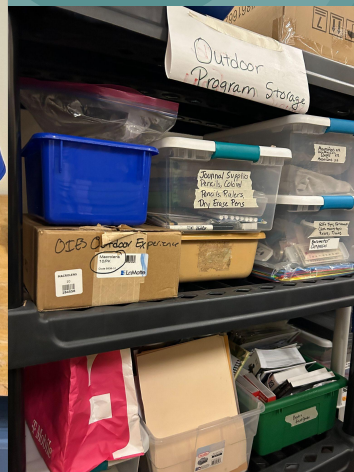
- Parent volunteers are recruited by classroom teacher- 3 for each trip
- Purpose is to support student learning
 - Keeping kids on task, assisting naturalist, keeping kids safe
 - A bilingual parent is valuable to support ELL students
- Parent volunteer handbook outlines expectations, purpose, behavior guidelines, and emergency procedures. - [Link to Handbook](#)

Materials

- Example of a Lesson Bin
- [Materials List Link](#)

ITEM	#
WATER STUDY	
Petri Dishes w/lid pack of 20	1
Medicine Dropper, Plastic, 1-mL Nipple, 3 1/2", Pack of 12	1
submersible thermometer	
ph strips	
PLANKTON STUDY	
Student Plankton Net (100 microns), 8"-diameter Mouth	1
Plankton net Replacement bottles	2
ProtoSlo	1
Salinity Meter	1
droppers	
Sorting sheets for water invertebrates	





Resources

Many environmental organizations have free resources, and even complete lesson plans that can be accessed for free.

[The Beetles Project](#) from University of California Lawrence Hall of Science provides excellent lessons on a variety of topics.

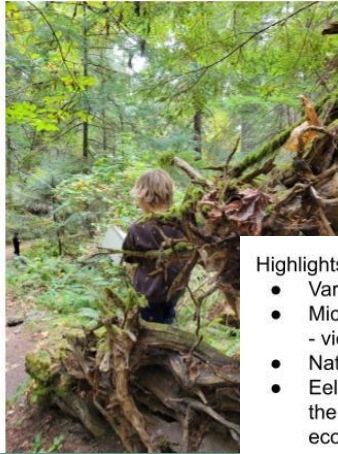


Resources

- US Fish & Wildlife Field Investigations
- Feather River Learning Landscapes Handbook
- Compass to Nature Teaching Outdoors
- Washington Native Plant Society Plant ID
- Since Time Immemorial Curriculum
- Project Wild, Aquatic Wild, Learning Tree

Parent PR in School Newsletter

Fall Outdoor Experiences



Highlights Include:

- Various hikes around Moran State Park
- Microscopy - learning how to use our new microscopes - viewing various invertebrates and plant material
- Nature Journaling - specifically "My Secret Plant"
- Eel Grass Ecology / Habitat Studies - the importance of the eelgrass ecosystem - the difference between an ecosystem and a habitat - concluding in a predator prey game simulating an eelgrass bed and role playing predators.



Transportation

- The district provides bus transportation
- Some agencies have reimbursement dollars available to use their sites



Funding

- **District Education Foundation**
- **OSPI Outdoor Learning Grant Form Package 357**
 - **The Grant can be applied for year after year**
 - **Funds can pay for:**
 - **Naturalists**
 - **Training**
 - **Supplies and Materials (like ponchos and rain suits)**
 - **Transportation**

**Thank you! We hope to
have inspired YOU!**

Questions and Contact Information

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