

## 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.

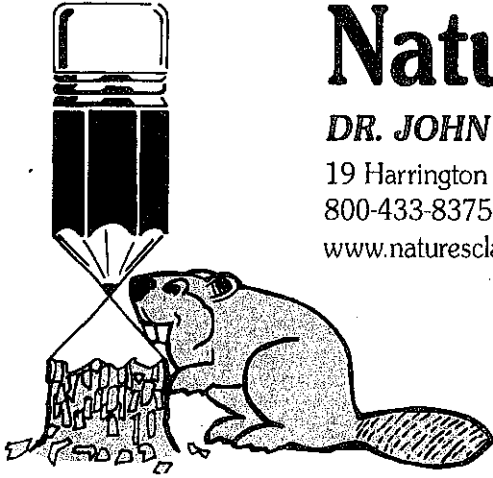
**Evening activities** may be done by the full community together or by the smaller field group. The activity's emphasis may be academic or social. Large group academic activities may include an Environmental Hearing, Alpha Beta, a Science Exposition, or Back to Basics. The Environmental Hearing, set 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®

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## NATURE'S CLASSROOM INSURANCE COVERAGE

Many schools have been requesting additional information about the Nature's Classroom insurance coverage. The following has been compiled to help ease the minds of parents, teachers, principals, etc. Keep in mind, also, that before a child receives outside medical treatment, his/her parents are notified. Nature's Classroom is insured in the following manner:

### STUDENTS

\$2500 each accident/injury

\$ 750 each sickness

"Injury" means bodily injury to the child resulting directly and independently of all other causes in loss from accident occurring during the child's stay at Nature's Classroom.

"Sickness" means sickness or disease of a child which first manifests itself during the child's stay at Nature's Classroom.

The policy does not cover the following:

- pre-existing conditions. (For example: a child comes to Nature's Classroom with a cold; the cold worsens and medical attention is sought; payment would be the parent's responsibility.)
- intentional, self-inflicted injury.
- preventative medicines, vaccines, or medical examinations which are not necessary for the treatment of injury or sickness.
- repair, replacement, examinations for prescriptions or fitting of eyeglasses, contact lenses, or hearing aids.
- any dental work or treatment of natural teeth, cosmetic or plastic surgery not necessary for the repair or alleviation of injury.
- the repair or replacement of existing dentures, partial dentures, braces, bridges, or other artificial dental restoration.
- the repair or replacement of artificial limbs or orthopedic braces.

**NOTE:** This policy does not cover visiting teachers and other adult supervisors.

# 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**