

THE OUTDOOR LAB: Information for Teachers

SETTING & FACILITIES

The Outdoor Lab is an over 200-acre outdoor education center in Fauquier County that is owned by the Arlington Outdoor Education Association (AOEA). AOEAE is a non-profit organization whose primary mission is to promote and provide outdoor education experiences for Arlington students and citizens. AOEAE and the Arlington Public Schools (APS) work cooperatively in this effort. The education program conducted at the Outdoor Lab is under the direction of the Science Office/Department of Instruction within APS. The property is officially called the Phoebe Hall Knipling Outdoor Laboratory in honor of Dr. Phoebe Knipling who, as a former APS Science Supervisor, was instrumental in establishing the facility as an outdoor education site.

The **land resource** is exquisite. Its two wooded mountains are split by a spring-fed stream that flows over a series of geological faults into a small pond that is teeming with life. The property also boasts a large rolling meadow and a mixture of hardwoods and conifers that make it an ideal habitat for Virginia wildlife.

The **facility**, while rustic, includes:

- a dining room and kitchen
- a classroom/wildlife lab equipped with microscopes
- an ever-increasing assortment of interdisciplinary study equipment
- over 5 miles of marked trails
- indoor restroom facilities
- approximately 22 canvas tents that can be mounted on wood platforms; in case of inclement weather, sleep accommodations are available in the classroom/wildlife lab building.

The **staff** consists of co-directors, both of whom are APS teachers; two resource/teacher assistants; and a maintenance person.

LOCATION

The Lab is located 35 miles west of Arlington in Broad Run, Virginia. The trip to the Lab takes approximately an hour by school bus. Most of the travel is along Interstate Route 66.

SCHEDULING A FIELD TRIP TO THE LAB

Students in Grades 3, 5, and 7 are allocated days to visit the Outdoor Lab. Each school is given a set number of days (proportional to its enrollment) and the dates change each year to vary the seasons. In addition, all high schools and alternative programs are provided a day to visit the Lab; how this day is used is the responsibility of each school's administration. Nearly every day that school is in session there is an APS field trip scheduled for the Outdoor Lab.

STUDENT NUMBERS & BUS TRANSPORTATION

For elementary school trips, the bus can accommodate a **maximum** of 76 students; each adult riding the bus accounts for **two** student seats. At the middle and high school levels, the bus can carry a maximum of 52 people (students or adults). With the permission of the Lab Directors, more students may attend each day, but additional bus transportation must be arranged through your school. Please note, however, that smaller groups have more direct access to the Lab's teaching staff and this increases the overall quality of the experience.

The bus assigned to the Outdoor Lab is a regular school bus and is not able to accommodate wheelchairs. **If you have a student(s) requiring specialized transportation or services, please contact the Lab Directors to discuss the options AND the Science Office so a wheelchair bus can be reserved.**

INCLEMENT WEATHER CANCELLATIONS

If Fauquier County schools are closed or have a delayed opening, trips to the Outdoor Lab are canceled. Likewise, if Arlington County Schools are closed or have a delayed opening, Outdoor Lab trips are canceled. In either case, the Lab staff will notify Transportation about the bus. Information on school closings or delays in Fauquier County is available by calling Fauquier County's Inclement Weather Hotline at 1-540-422-7250 (recorded message) or on the Web at www.fcps1.org.

If a teacher decides to cancel the day before or the morning of the trip, he/she is responsible for contacting Transportation (x6640 Main Number), Neil Heinekamp or Christine Payack (Lab: 1-866-295-1118), and the Science Office (x6166).

WHAT HAPPENS ON A FIELD TRIP TO THE OUTDOOR LAB?

The agenda for a visit is determined by the teacher(s) scheduling the trip, in consultation with the Lab staff. These trips should correlate with the curriculum currently being taught in the classroom. Some teachers request the Lab staff incorporate a review of SOL material into their activities. At the high school level, most teachers have projects planned that involve data collection and analysis. The Lab staff is happy to assist you, as needed.

Typical day trip: The bus will arrive at your school at its normal start time. Upon reaching the Lab, a staff member will greet the group and orient them to the main facility. There is usually about two hours of activities before lunch and another hour and a half of activities after lunch. Activities during the day may include curriculum-based nature walks, compass navigation and orienteering, ecological studies and aquatic analyses, lessons using simple machines, or group initiative games. Students in Grade 3 should bring their own lunch. At your discretion, students in Grades 5 and up may purchase a hot dog cookout for \$4.00 per person; each classroom teacher should collect this fee in advance of the trip and give it to the school's treasurer. Please note that purchasing lunch is voluntary. You may decide to have all your students bring lunch or you may allow those who want to purchase lunch to do so.

Typical overnight trip: All Grade 5 classes are offered the opportunity to spend a night at the Lab. Overnights are scheduled over a block of Monday/Tuesday or Thursday/Friday. Students bring a sleeping bag, a change of clothes and personal items, and a bag lunch to eat on the first day. Each student is provided a thin ensolite pad to sleep on; a few extra sleeping bags and wool blankets are also available. After orientation to the facility, everyone helps to erect the tents, which are supplied by the Lab. Other than the bag lunch, all meals and snacks are provided as part of the trip fee of \$10.00 per person. Classroom teachers should collect this fee in advance of the trip and give it to the school's treasurer. Activities are similar to those mentioned for day trips, supplemented by an evening program and other lessons as planned in advance with the Lab Directors. Following a cookout lunch and final clean-up on the second day, the bus returns to school before the end of the regular day.

Meals: The typical cookout lunch consists of turkey or tofu hot dogs, potato chips, apple slices, a s'more, and lemonade or water. For overnights, the typical dinner consists of meat or vegetable lasagna, garlic bread, salad, ice cream, and water. Breakfast is a choice of cereals (Cheerios, Rice Krispies, or Raisin Bran), donuts, milk, orange juice, and hot chocolate. The Lab tries to have almond butter and jelly and either Rice or Soy milk on hand. If a student has food allergies or dietary restrictions, please let the Lab Directors know in advance of your trip. For overnight trips, the Lab is not able to provide separate meals to accommodate specific food allergies. In such cases, arrangements can be made for a student to bring his/her own food. Please contact the Lab Directors for further information.

CHAPERONES

Many parents welcome the opportunity to chaperone during a class trip to the Outdoor Lab. The Lab staff and classroom teacher(s) lead the instructional sessions, but the help provided by chaperones is often key to a successful trip. Chaperones are needed to assist in meal preparation and clean-up, to pass out supplies, to perform head counts, to bring students between work stations, etc.

In requesting chaperones, please make it clear that the Lab is a nature education facility. It does not have paved roads and the activities may involve hiking and uneven terrain. In addition, please honor the limit placed on the number of chaperones (maximum of 10, based on the size of your group). The Lab

site is used almost every day school is in session, as well for several weeks during the summer. As much as we appreciate the enthusiasm of parents to help out, we must also consider the fragile nature of the Lab's environment to prevent damage from overuse.

ONCE SIGNED UP, WHAT CAN I EXPECT?

Several weeks before your scheduled date, the Trip Coordinator will receive an e-mail reminder that will include instructions for accessing the online Trip Confirmation Form. This form needs to be completed and submitted electronically at least **one week** in advance of your outing. All other supporting information and forms, such as Directions, Payment for Lunches or Overnights (if applicable), all APS Permission slips, a list of suggested equipment for the overnight, etc. —may be found as links on the Lab's web page. Go to www.apsva.us/science/outdoor-lab and click on the link for the information desired.

The Science Office makes the bus reservations. There is no charge to the schools for the regular Outdoor Lab bus.

ARE THERE OTHER WAYS IN WHICH MY STUDENTS OR I MAY USE THE LAB RESOURCE?

The Outdoor Lab offers an ever-evolving program and many options are possible. The Lab can be used as the focus for a science fair project or for a class project. If you have an idea for using the facility, feel free to raise it with the Lab Directors. In addition, every summer the Outdoor Lab runs week-long summer camp programs for students completing Grades 4 through 8. Dates are announced in the Summer School Bulletin. Several times a year, AOEA sponsors a weekend open house when the property is open to all Arlington residents. To learn more about these various events, contact the AOEA and request to be put on its mailing list (see below).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

To get on the **AOEA's mailing list**, please contact:

AOEA - Outdoor Lab
P. O. Box 5646
Arlington, VA 22205
703-228-7650

For the **Outdoor Lab Facility**, please contact:

Neil Heinekamp, Co-Director
Email: neil.heinekamp@apsva.us
Christine Payack, Co-Director
Email: christine.payack@apsva.us
Lab Phone: 1-866-295-1118 (toll-free)

For the **APS Science Office**, please contact:

Office Phone: 703-228-6166
Email: dat.le@apsva.us (Dat Le, Supervisor, Science)
Email: chris.reid@apsva.us (Christine Reid, Administrative Assistant)