

taft times

Fall 2005

Northern Illinois University Lorado Taft Field Campus

Oregon, IL

Teambuilding Becoming Focus at Taft

Schools who come to Taft have different objectives for their trip. Some visitors want Taft to help them meet educational goals or to get their students out of the classroom to participate in some hands-on learning. Teachers and administrators view the Taft experience as an opportunity to get their students “out of the box” or “comfort zone”; because they are away from home and school. Many people also recognize the visit to Lorado Taft is an opportunity for students to come together as a group or team.

Teambuilding and the challenge course are one of the more popular subjects we offer at Taft. The wonderful opportunity presented by teambuilding classes is the variety of topics that can be discussed. Communication, cooperation, compromise, trust, leadership and other social skills are all fair game. The course itself is an awesome tool to use with students to bring out examples and discussion points to use during a class. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, classes are not always able to touch on many of these topics.



Because teambuilding is such an important topic and Taft would like to offer the highest quality experience possible to all of the schools that visit, some changes are being made to the teambuilding program. These changes will give teachers more options to meet their teambuilding needs when the schedules are created. Time constraints that the challenge course facilitators face should also be reduced or eliminated.

When planning your Taft visit, at least a two and one half hour block of time must be set aside to journey to the teams course. This will allow students to spend at least two hours at the course and will allow thirty minutes for travel time (fifteen minutes each way).

Your Taft coordinators will be happy to discuss scheduling options and creative ways to meet your needs.

Realizing that not everyone will be able to carve out large blocks of time in their schedule, on campus options will also be available. Ground initiatives and portable elements, such as the *all aboard*, *pipeline*, *three islands*,

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Becky is Back!

Charlotte Melson has left Taft to return to California. Becky Peterson, a former education program specialist has returned to Taft to be the new Assistant Coordinator.

She is very excited to be back at Lorado Taft, after being gone for a year. She went to school at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, where she majored in biology with an environmental science minor. After graduation, she came to Taft and found that she loved environmental education as well as northern Illinois. Becky loves seeing how students react to being outside, and how surprised they are to find out they actually learned something and had fun while doing it.

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Nurses Notes

Here are a few helpful reminders to make your visit to Taft smoother when you arrive!

- Health forms should be sent to Taft 2 weeks before your visit. A student who has come to Taft without a health form is not allowed to participate and must be supervised by a school official until a health form can be obtained.
- Collect all medications prior to leaving school. Make sure everything is labeled.
- Leave prescription medications in their original bottle. The bottle will be returned.
- Encourage parents to write down exact dosages and distribution times on their students health form.
- Inhalers and epi-pens that are needed by students in case of emergency should be kept by the student. All other scheduled medications are to be kept and distributed by either the Taft nurse, school nurse or school official.



Additions to the Program

A new school year brings new treats to Taft. In addition to the changes to the challenge course class, we are proud to show off the brand new campfire ring that has been completed at the river delta. With these new benches, we hope that you will join us for a campfire by the water. We have also started to do some landscaping on our bird porch. This will hopefully provide more food and cover for our feathered friends as well as improving the view from the Poley porch.



We also would like to introduce several new evening program options. In **Science Fair**, we will explore the scientific method through experiments in chemistry and physics. In the **H2O-lympics**, students will participate in events that will allow them to explore the different properties of water and how it allows us to survive on our planet. If you held a **Town Meeting**, students would have the opportunity to create a proposal to present to a simulated city council. **Dutch Auction** and **Weather** activities are possible “blasts from the past” as well. If you have any questions or would like to sign up for any of these activities, please contact your coordinator.

Teambuilding Changes

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trolleys, and *nuclear waste*, will be available for facilitators. These activities give students a challenging experience and will allow them to work on the same teambuilding principles as on the ropes course without having to make the journey.

Other options are also available. Tweaks are being made to the orienteering and survival classes to enhance the teamwork that students were already using in the class. Students have to work together to find orienteering points, start fires or build shelters. In addition to the topics that are normally covered, Taft instructors can direct this group work in a more team-focused class so that students will be able to discuss some of the same topics as they would on the challenge course.

As always, your Taft coordinator will be happy to work with you to craft a schedule that best meets your needs while offering the highest quality classes and service. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact your coordinator.





Why Do Leaves Change Color?

Will This Years Drought Effect The Colors?

Each year, we are lucky enough to experience the beautiful fall colors that appear around Taft in September and October, but have you ever wondered why this happens and what effect weather can have on the colors that are produced?

leaves, which give them their green color. However, in early autumn, the production of chlorophyll is decreased and, eventually, is not produced anymore. When this happens we are able to see all the other pigments within the leaves, which gives us the beautiful golds, purples, oranges, yellows and reds of the fall season.

All leaves contain different color pigments within their leaves. Chlorophyll is the green pigment in trees that is responsible for turning the energy from the sun into chemical energy. Chlorophyll is always being produced and broken down in

Autumn colors are determined by the weather conditions that occur before and while the chlorophyll is being broken down in the leaves. For the best autumn colors we will need warm sunny days, and cool (not freezing) nights. This past season we have had such little rain, the fall colors may join us early. According to Penn State University, drought stressed trees show their colors early, change fast, then drop their leaves. The key, though, is the temperature. If the heat goes away and we can get some cool nights in early to mid-September the colors could still be very vibrant even if it might be a little shorter than normal.

Take Some Initiative!

Blind Polygon

Description: In a flat area, lay out a 40' length of rope. Blindfold half of the group. Allow the rest of the students to see. Place the blindfolds on the students before giving them the problem.

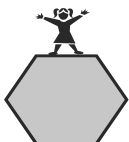
Problem: Using all the rope, without any overlap, a shape (pentagon, square, triangle, etc.) must be created.

Rules:

1. Only blindfolded persons are able to touch the rope.
2. Students without blindfolds may not touch students with blindfolds and vice versa.
3. Everyone must be actively involved in solving the problem.

Safety Procedures: Blindfolded students should move slowly to avoid tripping over obstacles.

Alternate Problem: Attempt it with the entire group blindfolded



The Return of Becky

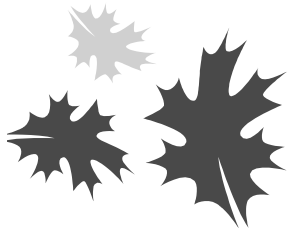
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After two years at Taft, she left to learn more about herself as well as the different ecosystems out in Southern California. California was a wonderful learning experience for Becky, because she was able to experience rattlesnakes, mountain lions, lizards and even one tiny earthquake. It also gave her the opportunity to be in a leadership position for the first time within the environmental education field. Even though she loved the experience out west, after awhile the constant blue sky, lack of flowing water and broad leaf trees made her think more and more about coming back to the Midwest. She is very happy to be back at Taft and is looking forward to working with you and making your experience at Taft a wonderful one.





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Lorado Taft Environmental Education Staff 2005-2006



Back Row from left

Cheryl Thompsen, Jessica Matthewson, Emily Michi, Walter Sams, Ames Molsberry, Jake Murphy, David Yuhaus

Front Row from left

Becky Peterson, Amanda Bowman, Matthew Santner, Jessica Oppen

**We are Looking
Forward to a
Great Year!!!!**

