

## Guidelines for Visiting Teachers & Chaperones

Whether this is your first time being in charge of a group of students or you have years of experience leading children, supervision during a residential outdoor experience requires some advance preparation. Keep the following list of guidelines in mind to help make your trip a success:

- ◆ First and most important, **BE PREPARED!** Be prepared for fun, insights, sleep deprivation, and a great deal of responsibility.
- ◆ Be sensitive to the feelings and emotions of the students in your care. For many of your charges, this is their first time away from home. They may look to you, at least partially, to step in and fill the “parent role.”
- ◆ Learn the names of the students in your group. If you are not already familiar with the students, provide them with name tags. Addressing the students by name will help to establish a positive atmosphere and make students feel important through this simple action.
- ◆ Establish expectations during the first few minutes with the group. Taft staff set minimum expectations including: respect for self, respect for others, and respect for nature. School staff may have additional expectations for students. Make certain that the students understand what type of behavior you expect from them and what is considered unacceptable.
- ◆ Discipline may be necessary. Consult with school personnel to determine what actions are appropriate and, if possible, discuss this in advance. Having a student who is disruptive or behaving in an unsafe manner sit out of the activity for a few minutes may be all that is needed for discipline. A fair, consistent, and firm leader is often respected. By demonstrating consistency throughout the residential experience, you will find your time more pleasurable. You will also save a great deal of time usually spent on discipline, and you will have demonstrated a basic quality of leadership.
- ◆ **Never use any form of physical, embarrassing, or corporal punishment.**
- ◆ While attending classes taught by Taft Staff, you may be asked to assist in watching groups or in disciplining students, if necessary. You may be more familiar with the students than the Taft staff and are a tremendous asset in making sure that students are behaving and attentive. You may want to talk with the instructor at the beginning of the class to determine what is expected of you in your role as observer or aide.
- ◆ Distractions from the planned lesson are common in the outdoor environment. The informal environment, the wonderful views, the wildlife, and the weather will compete with a student’s attention. Rather than trying to teach through or ignore these distractions, attempt to find creative ways to use them to your advantage. For example, if a woodpecker suddenly decides to search for insects in a dead tree, take advantage of the teaching moment and talk about the bird’s plumage, beak, or habitat. If something is truly interfering with the lesson, move your students to a new location.
- ◆ Getting the students’ attention is not always easy and shouting is usually not effective. Establish

a simple signal (hand raised) that signifies that the students will need to be quiet and listen to directions.

- ◆ Be on time. Know your group's schedule. Atomic clocks in the dining hall and classrooms always show the correct time. You may want to synchronize your watch. Make sure your group is on time for all activities, hopping, and meals.
- ◆ Never leave students unattended, especially in dorms. If you need to leave your group, arrange for another adult to stay with them in your absence.
- ◆ Keep track of your group. Make sure that you can account for every student in your charge before, during, and after every group activity.
- ◆ Make sure that students are attentive and cooperative in classes.
- ◆ Pay attention to the health of your students. Monitor their eating and sleeping habits. Observe hygiene and health needs. Report any abnormalities (sores, coughs, accidents, injuries, aches, lack of appetite, etc.) to the nurse or in her absence, the teacher in charge. All medications should be turned over to the nurse.
- ◆ Pay attention to the way your students dress. Make sure they are wearing clothing and jackets appropriate for the weather or class.
- ◆ Be conscious of safety. While physical safety is very important, emotional safety must also be considered. Emotional safety is violated when a student gets picked on by other students or is devalued or discounted by others. Providing a safe environment is paramount.
- ◆ Assess the interrelationships in your group. Help your students accept and respect themselves and each others. Try to lead them to be as sensitive to others' feelings as they are to their own. Give the student who lacks the art of social graces your special care.
- ◆ Help your students develop an attitude of respect for the grounds, facilities, and equipment. Report all breakages, losses, and damages to the Main Office. The school will be charged in the event of losses and willful or careless damage.
- ◆ Protect yourself. Avoid compromising situations with students by never getting yourself in a situation where you are alone with a student. Always use the buddy system - the student, you, and someone else (student or adult).

*Remember. Adults play an extremely significant role in the success of the residential outdoor education experience.*

*Thank you for sharing your time and talents with the students from your school.*

*We wish you the best as you strive to be friendly and fair and have fun.*