A Look at



Ohio FFA Camp Muskingum

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**FFA CAMP MUSKINGUM**

Ohio FFA Camp Muskingum is a 230 acre camp located 10 miles south of Carrollton, Ohio on the shores of Leesville Lake. It is truly a beautiful setting. On the 230 acres are various types of outdoor areas; from lake front to forests, meadows, pastures, wetlands, ravines, and more. Also at Camp is a historic barn and farm area and an outdoor amphitheater, as well as other interesting places.

Groups attending Nature's Classroom will stay in our spacious and comfortable dormitories. The dormitories are centrally located, fully winterized and heated. They are located within the well light main campus. Our four dorms are all equipped with attached showers and restrooms, and separate sleeping quarters for adults.

Our dining hall is large and comfortable. Our professional kitchen staff works with our groups to provide generous, nutritious, family-style meals. Groups attending Nature's Classroom have the option of designing their own menu. Nature's Classroom also provides a nutritious snack every evening.

FFA Camp Muskingum also has available many other buildings for use for indoor classes, activities, and meetings. Such buildings include the Conference Center, Assembly Hall, Nature Center and Pavilion, the Adventure Center and Visitor’s Lodge.

FFA Camp Muskingum is a full service, American Camping Association site approved camp with a full time staff of management, administration, maintenance, and food service. The professional staff, modern facilities, and beautiful setting make FFA Camp Muskingum the perfect place for a Nature's Classroom program.

**NATURE’S CLASSROOM PRIMARY OBJECTIVES**

Nature's Classroom at FFA Camp Muskingum can best be described as an interdisciplinary resident outdoor education program dedicated to motivational learning and personal development. Our program has many goals and objectives, and, as Nature's Classroom is an extension of the classroom, these goals and objectives are prioritized to meet the needs of each individual school. With a wide array of resources and program units, the Nature's Classroom Director will meet with your staff to design a curriculum to meet the needs of your students.

Among Nature's Classroom's primary objectives are these:

To enable students to:

* Increase their enthusiasm for learning and discovery
* Gain confidence and self-esteem
* Improve communication and other group dynamics skills
* Improve classroom performance
* Work productively with others (including student-teacher relationships) and increase community awareness
* Understand the inter-relationship of their basic academic skills
* Gain a greater appreciation of our wondrous natural world

To provide:

* Successful, hands-on learning situations
* New and exciting experiences
* Challenge
* Large and small group collaborative learning activities
* An atmosphere fostering excitement, enjoyment, and growth

From classes to field hikes, the nature center to the dining hall, a day at Nature's Classroom is non-stop excitement. The following pages will provide more insight to the details of our program.

**SUGGESTED 3 DAY SCHEDULE**

**\*This can be tailored and adjusted, and we also have sample schedules for longer or shorter stays.**

**FIRST DAY**

10:30 Arrive/Restrooms/Luggage Brigade

11:15 Move In & Adult Meeting

12:30 Sack Lunch

 1:45 Field Group

 3:15 Restroom

 3:30 Classes

 5:00 Restroom/Hoppers

 5:15 Dinner

 6:30 Recreation Break

 7:30 Campfire or Class

 9:15 Snack

 9:30 Showers & Bedtime

**SECOND DAY** **THIRD DAY**

 7:15 Wake Up 7:00 Wake Up/Move Out

 7:45 Hoppers 7:55 Hoppers

 8:00 Breakfast 8:00 Light Breakfast

 9:00 Clean Up 9:00 Field Group Clean Up

 9:30 New Games 9:30 Field Group

10:15 Field Group 11:00 Lunch

11:45 Restroom/Hoppers 11:50 Restrooms & Departure

12:00 Lunch

 1:00 Recreation Break

 2:00 Classes or Living History (2-5)

 3:30 Restroom

 3:45 Classes

 5:15 Restroom/Hoppers

 5:30 Dinner

 6:30 Recreation Break

 7:30 Night Hike or Campfire/Night Hike

 9:30 Snack

 9:45 Showers & Bedtime

**FIELD GROUP ACTIVITIES**

Each student at Nature's Classroom will be part of an assigned field group during their stay. Also part of each group is a Nature's Classroom instructor. We aim to keep the student-instructor ratio at or around 15 to 1, allowing field group members the chance to get to know each other. Field groups are the students' “families” during their stay at Nature's Classroom, as they will do many things together, and will depend on each other for safety, success, and camaraderie. Each field group will sit down to its own table at mealtime to share a family-style meal, will depend on each other to complete group responsibilities such as camp clean-up, and will experience other cooperative situations together. There are four main field group activities, which are described below.

ADVENTURE VALLEY

Adventure Valley is the name of our adventure challenge team-building program, which involves the use of a low ropes co-initiative course. In Adventure Valley, a field group will be presented with various mental and physical tasks and problems, which, as a group, they must attempt to solve. The tasks and problems involve warm-up initiative games, trust and support activities, and activities in our thirteen-element co-initiative course. The goals are to build cooperation, positive teamwork, communication, trust, leadership, planning, goal setting, enthusiasm, and confidence. It is the goal of the instructor to provide the right activity at the right time in order to meet the needs of the group. Again, tasks are set up for success, while kept in the range of challenge.

INTERPRETIVE NATURE HIKE

During our nature hike the emphasis is on discovery; not exercise. Though climbing the rolling hills around camp can be physically exhilarating, the main objectives of the hike include inquiry and discovery, sensory awareness, conservation, and appreciation of our natural world. FFA Camp Muskingum has many different outdoor settings that lend themselves to sensory experiences and teachable moments, including lake front areas, streambeds and ravines, sandstone formations, open fields and meadows, and over 200 acres of woodland. By exploring and playing games, students can better understand the concepts of ecosystems, habitats, forest ecology, weather, geological formations, and the interrelatedness of the world around them.

NATURE CENTER ACTIVITIES

Our Nature Center has live animals, mounts, bones, nests, rocks and minerals, visuals, games, and other tools for hands-on learning excitement. Sections include reptiles, amphibians, geology, insects, birds, and mammals. In addition to the physical materials in our facility, instructors also are prepared with games to help students better understand objectives such as adaptation, an organism’s niche, ecosystems, and dynamics of predators and their prey.

NIGHT HIKE

Listening to the night time sounds of the forest, exploring the functions of our eyes, using games and observation to gain a better understanding of creatures of the night, viewing the night sky and investigating basic astronomical concepts --these and many other activities are typical of a Nature's Classroom night hike. The night hike is often a student's most memorable Nature's Classroom activity. Those who had been eager to go on the night hike are thrilled to discover sights and sounds unknown, and those who had been nervous about it gain a sense of comfort with the night as they discover the amazement of the night sky. Whatever the case, our night hikes always contain laughs, awe, excitement, and discovery.

**CLASSES**

The emphasis for our classes is on learning motivation. Certain factors influence motivation, things such as relevance, active participation, and self-concept.

The goals of the classes are for the students to:

* Actively learn by doing
* Understand and recognize the relationship between major subject areas
* Work towards an attainable goal; work towards individual and group goals; understand the importance of goal setting
* Improve his/her self-concept
* Improve, understand, and appreciate positive group dynamics
* Gain an understanding of the personal value he/she can gain from education
* Have Fun!

The students observe introductions of various classes and choose the class in which they would like to participate. Being able to choose which class they want provides the opportunity to participate actively in the learning process, an important factor in learning motivation. Choosing gets the child involved personally; the class becomes meaningful from that point on.

In the class itself, the children are actively participating rather than passively listening or viewing. Ideally, classes and activities are kept within "the range of challenge" for both individuals and their groups. However, we also aim to provide successful experiences, without a competitive setting. For this reason, the Nature's Classroom instructors are trained to use various questioning techniques so as to lead students to discoveries of their own. This inquiry/discovery approach allows us to be leaders of learners, rather than dispensers of knowledge.

We let our instructors choose what they would like to teach, because if they make those choices, they are more passionate about the subject matter. In that passion, instructors are more excited to teach and students are more excited to learn from them. Joseph Cornell’s flow learning technique is something we encourage instructors to use due to its successfulness, but is not required. Rather, his four stages to awaken enthusiasm, focus attention, directly experience, and share the inspiration is a formula that works. Although instructors may develop their own lesson plan, we have resources at their disposal for curriculum development. Resources used regularly are Project Wild activity guides, Project Learning Tree activity guides, *Sharing the Joy of Nature*, and *Sharing Nature with Children* by Joseph Cornell, the New Games Foundation activities and exercises, and a multitude of other outdoor and educational resources. Some of those include the Ohio State Department of Education, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the Ohio Conservation and Outdoor Education Association, the National Wildlife Federation.

**LIVING HISTORY PROGRAM**

Our Living History Program takes the students back to 1851, a time when people in our country were risking their lives for basic rights and freedoms. This program gives participants the opportunity to learn about the people, places, and events that made up the Underground Railroad, by seeing and experiencing it through the eyes of a runaway slave. The participants, led by a conductor, act as runaway slaves as characters in our program who escape together. Throughout their journey, they encounter many people and situations on their quest for freedom. This program enlightens people to Ohio's rich and crucial involvement in the Underground Railroad. More importantly, it challenges participants to make positive changes toward the understanding and respect of *all* people today.

The Living History Program is offered to groups ranging from fifth grade to adults. We individually tailor the program to meet the needs and objectives of each group. The experience is offered as an all-camp program, which takes 3-4 hours.

Program Objectives

Participants will be able to:

 1) Identify components of the Underground Railroad (conductor, abolitionist signs, Fugitive Slave Act and more)

 2) Compare the racism of slavery with modern day discrimination and prejudice

3) Evaluate their own behavior and compare it to the behavior of the characters on the Underground Railroad

 4) Gain awareness of the multicultural aspects of American History

 5) Develop an interest for further study of the Underground Railroad

**EVENING PROGRAMS**

The evening programs follow the Nature's Classroom philosophy of motivational learning, community awareness, large group fun, and personal growth. We have lots of evening programs from which to choose. The more popular ones are as follows:

CAMPFIRE

The evening campfire is a social setting that just cannot be matched. Sitting around that magical fire, singing songs of many cultures, presenting skits and talents learned in the day's classes, listening to stories of Native American and other cultures, laughing, singing, and yelling for energy chants -- all of these and many other things make for a wonderful way to begin the evening.

NIGHT HIKE

See field group activities.

EXTREME CHALLENGES

Extreme challenges are a chance for the campers to work together as a group by completing tasks. The challenges are designed to help students step out of their comfort zone, act silly, get to know each other, and get to know their instructor.

ALPHA-BETA

Alpha-Beta can be offered as an afternoon class, but takes an hour and a half so is often scheduled as an evening program. Alpha-Beta teaches the participants to be more aware of people unlike themselves (which they find to be more like themselves than expected!). During the program, two “societies” are formed: the Alphas and the Betas. They are remarkably different in terms of language, daily routine, and social values. Each society will meet representatives of the other society, and following each encounter; they share thoughts, feelings, and observations with members of their own community. At the end of the activity, students debrief on what they experienced and talk more about treating people differently.

DANCE

A Nature's Classroom dance is not an ordinary dance. The instructors lead the students in various line dances where everyone participates. Dances are structured so that students feel comfortable interacting with each other in a positive setting.

**NATURE’S CLASSROOM PHILOSOPHIES**

Nature's Classroom offers some very special activities for participating schools. The four concepts described below are right at the heart of Nature's Classroom's objectives, and each has inspired unique Nature's Classroom programs. The concepts are: 1) IALAC; 2) Sensory Awareness; 3) Ort and Conservation; 4) Group Dynamics. While each concept has its activities, each one is also woven into every aspect of the program.

**IALAC**

IALAC stands for "I Am Loving and Caring" and is a pervasive attitude in everything we do at Nature's Classroom. Everyone is always reminded to "keep that IALAC attitude". Having the "IALAC attitude" means being friendly, helpful, generous, positive, trustworthy, forgiving, -- it means being a loving and caring person. Sharing is also an important part of the IALAC attitude, and at Nature's Classroom we share in many different ways. Before each meal everyone is encouraged to stand up, say their name, and share with the group something positive about their day. Thank yous, congratulations, appreciation, exciting discoveries, new experiences, joy, and other such positive things are commonly shared at mealtime. Found in the dining hall for the duration of the program is what we call the IALAC Chart. The IALAC Chart is a graffiti wall of sorts; it is a posterboard on which everyone involved with the program is encouraged to write loving and caring comments. Comments frequently found on the IALAC chart are: "camp is a lot of fun, you get to learn new things all the time", "Emma is cool!", "Field Group #3 rocks", "this food is better than at school", "I love Nature's Classroom, I will be sorry to leave". The IALAC chart is filled throughout the program and returns to the school with the students, and serves as reminder of their experience. Many schools choose to continue the concept of IALAC by putting their own IALAC chart in a classroom or in the hallway and share IALAC with everyone in the school. Hopefully, lessons learned at Nature's Classroom will help young people to continue on "keeping that IALAC attitude", and to take pride in themselves, others around them, and their communities.

At Nature's Classroom we do not believe in put downs, only in put ups. Therefore, it is a Nature's Classroom rule that if a student accidentally (or non-accidentally) puts down another individual they must apologize, and they owe that person three put ups, such as, "I really like how you are always helpful and friendly; you're nice to be around", "you are a great friend", or "you are a very good student". Though we hope for no put downs at all, this aspect of our IALAC program allows people to become more aware of the things they are saying. Now when someone is the recipient of a put down, instead of retaliating or not letting their anger show, they may ask for three put ups. A potentially upsetting situation has been turned into a positive experience. Put ups for put downs allows people to become more sensitive to the feelings of others.

**SENSORY AWARENESS**

Many people are overly dependent upon one or two senses and fail to utilize all five senses on a regular basis. Our program attempts to draw the students into utilizing all of their senses to the fullest extent. Sensory awareness is a concept found in nearly every activity, yet we have classes and activities dedicated solely to this. It is the backbone of our interpretive nature hikes and our night hikes; it is part of our nature center activities and virtually all aspects of the program.

Many activities are done to help facilitate these concepts. Most visible is our Sensory Awareness Chart, which is hung near the IALAC Chart. A field group that has gone down to the creek to study and handle crayfish may put on the Sensory Awareness Chart in the section of touch that they handled a crayfish. Another field group went into the upper meadow and may have heard a woodpecker and seen wild turkeys. Subsequently they would, upon their return, write woodpecker in the area of hearing and turkeys in the area of sight. We have found that this chart works very well because not only do the students communicate and share information, but the quiet children can express themselves on it and elevate their sense of self-esteem. The more outgoing child may choose to stand up and verbally share something with the group at the beginning of a meal, and often many or all of the sharings are exciting new experiences with our senses.

**ORT AND CONSERVATION**

The "Ort Report" is our food conservation program that takes place during each meal. Ort is all the food that is left over on an individual's plate when they have completed the meal. Since we eat all of our meals family style as opposed to cafeteria style, each individual takes the food out of a serving bowl or platter and serves themselves what they wish to eat. However, many individuals tend to take more than what they plan on eating and, therefore, there is potential for a huge amount of waste when large groups are eating together. Everyone is introduced to the concept of ort to stress the value of food as a valuable source of energy, and the importance of conserving that energy. The United States of America wastes more food than any other country in the world. All of that wasted food represents an unimaginable amount of wasted energy and resources. The Ort Report is helping to change that.

At the close of a meal the students collect all of the ort left on their plates and measure it in a large measuring bucket. Each meal's results are graphed on the Ort Chart, and the chart is monitored throughout the week. So, the first meal may have had eleven cups of ort, but by the seventh meal the group may have no wasted food and achieved their first ortless meal. If the group has an ortless meal they may choose a Nature's Classroom staff member, or another willing and enthusiastic adult to perform the silly Ort Dance which involves dancing around the entire dining hall with the empty measuring bucket on their head while everyone is clapping and cheering.

We firmly believe in positive reinforcement for concepts understood by the students and we find that the Ort Report allows them to apply conservation education to water and electricity as well. At Nature's Classroom we will monitor our effectiveness at conserving these resources, while encouraging each other to remember to turn out the lights, and not to waste water. Therefore, all participants with Nature's Classroom thoroughly begin to understand the importance of conservation education during their residential stay, and leave having had practical lessons in the application of rationing valuable resources.

**GROUP DYNAMICS**

Our group dynamics concept is part of our personal and group development philosophy. Since all of the learning that takes place at Nature's Classroom is cooperative, we feel it is important for the students to begin to understand and utilize the concepts involved with group dynamics. Taking into consideration the nature of our program, and the age group of our students, we have established eight basic components of group dynamics: Trust; Communication; Cooperation; Following Directions; Planning Ahead; Leadership Skills; High Level of Enthusiasm; Positive Coed Interaction. Throughout the program the students are reminded of the function of the group and they are asked to evaluate the dynamics of their group (what is working? - what is not? - how can we improve?).

It is in our low-ropes co-initiative course that group dynamics are especially stressed. Our co-initiative course is a series of elements with mental as well as physical obstacles. Each element confronts the group with a certain task and in order to succeed, the group must plan, communicate, cooperate, etc.. Aspects of group dynamics that are not part of our eight keys, such as conflict and resolution, are also covered as these situations arise.

The most important step in the co-initiative process is what we call the debrief. After each task is complete the group will sit down to discuss what happened and how, why, why not, etc.. The group might raise questions like "What was done well?", "What improvements could be made for the next task?", "How did all this make you feel?", etc.. A very important question that is asked in the debrief is "How does all of this apply to other things we do? School? Home? Club? Team? Work?"

Though the co-initiative course is where group dynamics is best illustrated, it is stressed and utilized in classes, at meal time, recreation break, evening program, -- virtually all aspects of the program. It is a very rewarding concept for all those involved.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**TEACHER AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND SUPERVISION**

With the help of your school's staff, parents, and other visiting adults, the students are provided with 24 hour supervision. The Nature's Classroom staff will be responsible for all supervision and guidance aside from restroom breaks between activities, 1 hour recreation breaks, and supervision in the restrooms and dormitory at night.

Teacher and parent involvement in classes, field groups, and other program activities is left up to the school staff and participating adults. Visiting adults are encouraged to take one of three levels of participation: observation, participation, or instruction. They will be given recommendations, guidelines, and instruction by the Nature's Classroom Director at the start of the program. Most of all, they are encouraged to be supportive, have fun, and learn some, too!

**SAFETY, MEDICAL CARE, AND MEDICINE**

At Nature's Classroom we go to great lengths to insure a safe environment for all participants. All Nature's Classroom employees are thoroughly trained in first aid, CPR and emergency procedures on camp, injury and illness procedures and practices, and many rules and regulations for program activities to insure safety. Each instructor carries a first aid kit and water bottle at all times in case of an emergency.

All medication, unless otherwise handled by the participating school, is monitored and dispensed by the Camp nurse. Each student taking prescription medication will be put on a schedule with direction from parents and physician, and will receive that medication as instructed. No medication will be given without parental consent.

Also on call 24 hours are a local physician, and METS ambulance service. METS transports to Mercy Hospital and Aultman Hospital which are each 45 minutes away.

**INSURANCE**

All students attending a Nature's Classroom residential program are covered by our camp insurance policy against accident and illness.