



# FOREST SCHOOL TEACHER GUIDE

Forest School is a cooperative program between  
North Cascades Institute and Bellingham Public Schools

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# WELCOME!

At North Cascades Institute, our mission is to inspire and empower environmental stewardship *for all* through transformative educational experiences in nature. Since 1986, we have been proud to offer quality programs that connect people of all ages to the natural world.

We are excited that you and your class will be coming to our Forest School program at the Gordon Carter Conservation Site. This Teacher Guide includes everything you will need to plan your trip and prepare your students, parents, and chaperones for the experience.

This Teacher Guide includes the following sections to help you organize your trip:

- General Program Information
- Teacher Planning Information
- Parent and Chaperone Information

We're looking forward to an incredible Forest School session with you and your class! Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or need more information.

## **For scheduling, pricing, and contract information:**

Codi Hamblin  
School Programs Manager  
Email: [codi\\_hamblin@ncascades.org](mailto:codi_hamblin@ncascades.org)  
Phone: 360-854-2598

## **For program planning and logistics after your group has been scheduled:**

Abby Sussman  
School Day Programs Coordinator  
Email: [abby\\_sussman@ncascades.org](mailto:abby_sussman@ncascades.org)  
Phone: 610-417-0903

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## PROGRAM GOALS, THEMES & LINES OF INQUIRY

### Program Goals

1. Foster a sense of place through natural history, science, and social studies education.
2. Support curriculum objectives outlined by Bellingham Public Schools and integrate NGSS through outdoor, experiential education.
3. Facilitate exploration, experimentation, inquiry, and play.
4. Provide experiences that encourage social emotional skill building through perspective taking, relationship building, collaborative work, self-reliance, and problem solving.
5. Spark connections by students to prior lessons and build a foundation for future coursework.
6. Serve all of Bellingham Public School third graders.

### Alignment with WSSLS/NGSS:

1. Construct an argument that some animals form groups that help members survive. (3-LS2-1)
2. Construct an argument with evidence that in a particular habitat some organisms can survive well, some survive less well, and some cannot survive at all. (3-LS4-3)
3. Make a claim about the merit of a solution to a problem caused when the environment changes and the types of plants and animals that live there may change (3-LS4-4)

### Themes and Lines of Inquiry

Unit Theme: Organisms and environments are interdependent.

Field Trip Theme: Habitat; Lines of Inquiry:

- a) What is a habitat? What must an organism find in a habitat to survive?
- b) How do adaptations help animals survive?
- c) How do animals work as a community to improve survivability?
- d) How do animals and plants interact with each other?

## PROGRAM SCHEDULE

### Field Day Schedule

8:00am: school begins

9:00: depart school

9:20: arrive at Gordon Carter Site, welcome and introduction

9:45: bathrooms, form learning groups

*Lessons/activities/snack/lunch on the trail in small groups*

1pm-1:30pm: Wrap up: sharing, bathrooms

1:40: depart Gordon Carter Site

2:00: arrive at school

2:30: school dismissal

## FACILITY AND CONTACT INFORMATION

**Facilities:** The Gordon Carter Conservation Site is rustic and unimproved. Currently, there are several small open-air shelters, a pavilion, a log cabin and port-a-potties. We will provide drinking water on-site.

**Lunch & Snacks:** Students should bring a good lunch, snacks, and a water-bottle with them. There is no garbage service at the site, please help students pack all waste out.

**Risk During Forest School:** Our program involves hiking on trails and being outside for an extended period of time. While instructors make every effort to exercise caution to prevent mishaps, participants (including adults) must assume full responsibility for their individual safety and must provide their own health and accident insurance. Keep in mind that we are sharing the outdoors with mosquitoes, black flies, ticks, snakes, black bears, cougars, inclement weather, and other unpredictable natural elements. Protective clothing, sunscreen, raingear, and insect repellent are advised.

**\*\*IMPORTANT:** All participants (including chaperones and teachers) must complete and sign a Participant Information and Release (PIR) form.

Teachers are responsible for checking that all forms are filled out completely and have all the necessary signatures. If a student arrives with incomplete paperwork, you as the teacher will be asked to complete and sign all necessary forms after receiving verbal permission from the parent/guardian.

### Contact Information:

Abby Sussman, School Day Programs Coordinator is the main contact for Forest School.

cell: 610-417-0903

email: [abby\\_sussman@ncascades.org](mailto:abby_sussman@ncascades.org)

## DIRECTIONS TO FOREST SCHOOL

Forest School is located at the Gordon Carter Conservation Site on the southeast side of Lake Whatcom.

**Directions from Bellingham:** From I-5, take exit 240 Lake Samish Road. Take Lake Samish Road east to Alger Cain Lake Road. In approximately 5 miles make a right onto S. Bay Dr. Continue on S. Bay Dr. for 2 miles. The Conservation Site will be on the right. It is a steep, narrow road from S. Bay Dr. into the site. Please use caution and advise chaperones driving on their own to give the bus plenty of room.

Estimated driving time to Gordon Carter from Bellingham: 30 minutes

**\*\*IMPORTANT:** One chaperone from your school group must drive separately so that a vehicle will be at the Conservation Site in the event that a student must leave early.

## ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

**Arrival Time:** We expect schools to arrive at the Conservation Site by 9:20am. Please notify Abby Sussman (610-417-0903) by phone or text when you leave your school.

**Phones:** Some phone service providers have limited access at the site.

**Departure Time:** We will ensure that your bus departs promptly at 1:40pm

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## PROGRAM GUIDELINES FOR ADULTS AND STUDENTS

### Teacher and Chaperone Guidelines:

1. Due to the nature of outdoor programming, we require a **1:5 ratio of students to adult chaperones**. Contact Abby with specific questions for how many adults you need to bring with your class. Aides who support individual students on a daily basis or for medical reasons do not count towards the maximum number of chaperones.
2. One chaperone must drive separately so a vehicle will be at the Conservation Site in the event that a student must leave early.
3. The Gordon Carter Conservation Site is a Bellingham Public Schools facility. As such, all participants must adhere to all District policies. Smoking is not permitted.

### Teacher and Chaperone Responsibilities:

1. Overall preparedness—Help students be prepared for all activities; several reminders will be needed (i.e. BRNJWPLS [backpack, raingear, nametag, journal (provided) , water bottle, pencil (provided), layers].
2. Leading the Group--Chaperones are responsible for shepherding student groups the short distance between stations. Chaperones will get detailed direction from the Program Coordinator and instructors. All trails will be well marked and trail groups will never be far from an instructor with a radio.
3. Field Study Stations—Be an active participant in the trail group by role modeling appropriate behavior and assisting in reinforcing instructor's behavioral expectations for students. Encourage student inquiry and active participation from all students in the trail group. **Teachers and chaperones should be physically able to hike 1-3 miles each day and should be prepared to spend the entire day in the elements.**
4. Medications—Teachers and/or chaperones may be required to distribute student medications. ***Forest School staff are unable to distribute student medications.***
4. Be a positive role model—Come to Forest School ready to participate with enthusiasm and a good attitude. Remember that your main role at Forest School is to provide supervision to, and interact with, **ALL** students.

### Student Responsibilities:

1. Students are expected to adhere to the same responsibilities and conduct as in their classroom community.
2. Students are encouraged to participate to the best of their abilities in all activities. Instructors and staff are sensitive to the wide range of student needs and will do their best to create a safe learning environment. One way to help us do that is to complete and send your Pre-Trip Questionnaire ahead of time.
3. Many students will be challenged by a new learning environment. We hope students will be empowered to try new things and expand their comfort zones.

## TEACHER CHECKLIST

### 2 Weeks prior to your arrival at Forest School

\_\_\_ Abby Sussman will email you the *Participant Information* and *Release Forms and Trail Group Forms*. These will also be available online.

\_\_\_ Distribute *Participant Information and Release* forms and *Parent Letter* to students, chaperones and other teachers.

### 1 Week prior to your arrival at Forest School

\_\_\_ Communicate with the chaperones:

- Share trail group assignments
- Discuss chaperone responsibilities and expectations

\_\_\_ With Students:

- Make nametags for the day of the field trip
- Discuss expected academic goals and behavior expectations
- Discuss consequences for students who do not follow behavioral expectations
- Go over required equipment list, answer questions, and contact Abby Sussman ([abby\\_sussman@ncascades.org](mailto:abby_sussman@ncascades.org)) if you expect to need to borrow any items for your class

\_\_\_ Confirm bus transportation arrangements, give schedule and directions to bus driver

\_\_\_ Forest School staff will pick up all *Participant Information* and *Release Forms and Trail Group Form* from your school

### Arrival day at Forest School

\_\_\_ Make sure each student and chaperone have:

- Sack lunch and snacks
- Daypack: with water bottle, raingear, hat and gloves, clothing layers
- Nametags
- Remind students NOT to bring electronics, money, knives, etc.