

## Bradley Elementary School

155 David Humphreys Road • Derby, CT 06418-2250

Mr. Mario Ciccarini, Principal

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January 13, 2015

**To:** Dr. Matthew Conway, Superintendent of Derby Schools

**From:** Mario Ciccarini, Principal of Bradley School

**Re:** Proposed Grade 5 Field Trip to Nature's Classroom (Lakeside Location)

Dear Dr. Conway,

Based on previous experience with Nature's Classroom, I am proposing bringing our fifth grade class to their Lakeside, CT location.

**Rationale:** Nature's Classroom provides students with a unique opportunity to be part of a living and learning community with their peers. They use an inquiry-based approach to emphasize critical thinking and problem solving skills while strengthening the sense of community amongst the students. Students will leave Nature's Classroom with an understanding of real-world application to their academics and a greater sense of belonging with their peers, which will only help with the transition to middle school next year.

**Where:** Nature's Classroom, 190 Kenyon Rd., Lakeside, CT. (38.3 miles from Bradley School via Rt. 8N with a 50 minute estimated travel time)

**When:** Wednesday May 20, 2015 to Friday May 22, 2015. Pick-up at Bradley School would be on 5/20/15 at 9AM with an anticipated 10AM drop-off at Lakeside. Pick-up at Lakeside would be on 5/22/15 at 1PM with anticipated return to Bradley at 2PM. Parents would be required to pick-up their students from the school.

**Who would be attending:** The trip would accommodate all 55 current fifth grade students and 4 teacher chaperones. The fifth grade teachers would have the first opportunity to attend and then the trip would be opened up to other certified staff. 4 substitutes would need to be booked through Kelly services for non-grade 5 staff.

**Cost of Trip:**

Nature's Classroom = \$284 per student (already quoted) x 55 = \$15,620

All-Star Buses for both days = \$300 per bus x 2 = \$600 (already quoted)

Total Cost: \$16,220 / 55 students = \$295 per student\*

\*The PTA has said they will allot all fifth grade funds for field trips (\$1,200+) towards helping defer the cost of the trip per student. Bradley School will also help offset the cost of the trip for any families facing financial hardship and would like their child to participate.

Students of parents who do not wish for their child to participate will be placed in a 4<sup>th</sup> grade classroom and be provided with the assignments left by their classroom teachers.

Pending your approval, I will submit all the required district paperwork for Board approval.

Sincerely,

Mario Ciccarini

*At Bradley School we leave our P.A.W.S. on everything we do. We Persevere, Act Responsibly, Work and Play Safely, and Show Respect. These are the characteristics that define who we are and will help us become positive role models in our school and community.*

Greetings!

The purpose of this packet is to help you begin organizing your visit to Nature's Classroom. The following items need your prompt attention:

1. **Contracts.** To keep this date reserved, please sign the enclosed contracts and return ONE copy to us IMMEDIATELY. A stamped envelope is enclosed for your convenience. Please keep the other copy for your records.
2. **Fees.** For school groups waiving the right of exclusive use of our program, your price per child is stated in the contract. Please notify us if there is a change of more than five in your projected number of students. This will help us when matching groups and planning our staff size.  
  
For school groups having exclusive use of the program and staff, your cost is determined by the number of children you bring to us in relationship to the sliding scale listed on the contract.
3. **Deposits.** A deposit of 30% of your anticipated total payment is requested by the date shown on your contract (please call us if you need to arrange an extension). Please round this off to the nearest \$100 and send a SINGLE check to our Charlton address. The remainder is due 2 weeks before your group's stay with us.
4. **Parent Meeting.** If you are in need of a Nature's Classroom representative at your presentation to your students' parents, now is the time to schedule. PLEASE DON'T WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE. We suggest that presentations be done early for several reasons: 1) parents will be able to send deposits with pre-registration forms (which provides you with an estimated number of participants); 2) parents can begin budgeting and/or fundraising for the balance due; 3) students can begin saving and/or earning the balance (we have banking-style envelope available – call to request as many as you need); 4) both parents and students will be informed about Nature's Classroom and will look forward to the experience.

Enclosed are forms for use in an informational packet that can be sent to parents:

- a sample parent meeting notice/pre-registration form,
- a sample weekly schedule,
- a listing of special interest classes,
- a sample menu (optional to send to parents),
- an overview of the Nature's Classroom program,
- information concerning insurance coverage.

Additionally, we've included health forms, a suggested clothing list, and further information for planning your stay at Nature's Classroom. We can make available copies of our certificates of insurance and/or "Sample Proposal for a School to Attend Nature's Classroom", if your school board or superintendent requests such information.

If you foresee any difficulty on returning the contract or the required deposit, or if you wish to schedule a parent meeting, please call either John at 800-433-8375 or Rich at 508-248-2741 immediately.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



KT Therrien  
Administrative Assistant

## OVERVIEW OF NATURE'S CLASSROOM

Nature's Classroom offers a unique educational experience to students and their teachers. The goal of Nature's Classroom is to create a living-learning community that integrates the social development of that community with academic experiences. Common goals that are woven throughout the experience are for the student to improve his/her self-concept; to work together with others for the positive benefit of all members of the community; to recognize that the community is comprised of individuals with their own individual needs; to appreciate the individuality and uniqueness of each other; and to gain an understanding of what education can offer him/her. The process begins when teachers volunteer to bring their students to Nature's Classroom. Each Nature's Classroom program is developed in consultation with the classroom teachers in order to create an experience that is connected to the school's curriculum and goals.

The typical **daily schedule** at Nature's Classroom consists of a morning Field Group experience, two afternoon Special Interest class periods, and an evening activity. Meals and an evening snack are provided, and to close each day a Quiet Sing is presented.

The goal of the **field group** is for the student to understand and recognize the concept of dynamic equilibrium – constant upsetting influences being re-adjusted to maintain balance – in the natural world, in social interactions, and within him/herself. Each child is assigned by the classroom teacher to a field group and each group is assigned a single Nature's Classroom teacher. They focus on concepts and themes and their connection to the total life support system as they explore the natural environment. For example, the field group might examine producer, consumer, and decomposer concepts, predator-prey relationships or life cycles. The theme of "changes through time" may be an approach taken by a field group.

During the afternoon **Special Interest classes**, Nature's Classroom's academic environment, the emphasis is on learning motivation. The goals of the afternoon classes are for the student to choose the classes in which he/she is interested; to actively learn by doing; to understand and recognize the relationships between the major subject areas; to understand the importance of goal setting and work toward an attainable goal; and to gain an understanding of the personal value he/she can gain from education. The classroom teachers may request particular classes be offered from our two volume set of lesson plans and/or allow our teachers to teach classes of special interest to them.

**Evening activities** may be done by the full community together or by the smaller field group. The activity's emphasis may be academic or social. Large group academic activities may include an Environmental Hearing, Alpha Beta, a Science Exposition, or Underground Railroad. The Environmental Hearing, set in a town meeting format, gives students a chance to role-play in a simulated hearing over land usage. Groups are assigned roles as representatives of corporations, public interest groups, local citizens,

and conservationists. Each group expresses their opinions and viewpoints as they negotiate and seek support for their positions. The Science Expo provides students a chance to experience a variety of chemical and physical science demonstrations. Stopping at multiple stations staffed by Nature's Classroom teachers, students observe and assist in experiments and discuss the principles involved. An introductory explanation of the history of slavery in the United States sets the mood for the Underground Railroad role-playing activity. The students play the part of escaping slaves journeying to Canada under the guidance of an adult "conductor". Along the way they must evade the sheriff and his bounty-hunters, follow signs left by helpful abolitionists, and seek shelter in the local safe-house. A Folk Dance, a Mingle, or a Campfire are examples of social experiences. A Night Hike, with a focus on astronomy and vision, may be taken by the field group. Not all of these activities are done consistently at every site. Working with the Nature's Classroom Program Coordinator, classroom teachers can select those activities which best suit the goals they have for their students.

What the students learn in relation to community awareness and group cohesiveness in field groups and classes is applied in other activities. Mealtimes provide a chance to interact and to share experiences with others. The diversity within field groups, classes and other activities facilitates conversation among the students and adults allowing them to share their excitement. To be of service to the community, students take on the responsibility of helping as waiters.

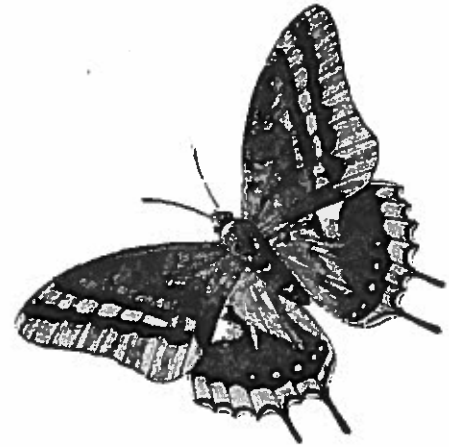
The Nature's Classroom teaching staff is composed of individuals with a minimum of a bachelor's degree. We maintain a teacher to student ratio of one to twelve or less. There is a nurse, EMT, or medical person on site or on call at all times. The children are provided with 24-hour adult supervision. The responsibilities for supervision are shared by the classroom teachers and the Nature's Classroom staff.

Having spent a week at Nature's Classroom, living and learning together, students develop a sense of community, a confidence in themselves, and an appreciation for others that carries over to the schoolcommunity. They see their classroom teacher as a person and friend in the learning process. The strengthened peer cooperation and expanded student-teacher relationships have an influence on the cognitive growth of the students throughout the school year. Together, they return to the classroom united through this shared experience to achieve the common goal of the pursuit of knowledge.

# Sample Basic Schedule

## First Day

11:00 Arrival & Settling In  
12:00 Lunch  
Orientation  
Field Experience  
4:00 Special Interests  
6:00 Dinner  
7:30 Quest  
Sing Down  
9:00 Snacks  
9:15 Quiet Sing



## Second Day

7:15 Rise and Shine!  
8:00 Breakfast & Clean Up  
9:30 Field Experience  
12:00 Lunch  
Free Time  
New Games  
2:00 Special Interests  
4:00 Special Interests  
6:00 Dinner and Free Time  
7:30 Night Walk  
9:00 Snacks  
9:15 Quiet Sing



## Third Day

7:15 Up and At 'Em  
8:00 Breakfast  
Final Clean Up  
Scavenger Hunt/  
Field Experience  
Evaluation  
12:00 Lunch  
Departure

# Sample of Special Interest Programming

The two volume curriculum text for **Nature's Classroom**, *AND THIS OUR LIFE*, and its unpublished appendices contain over 500 hands-on science, math, humanities, and social studies lesson plans with follow-up activities for use in the schoolroom as well as references for further investigation.

## FIRST CLASS

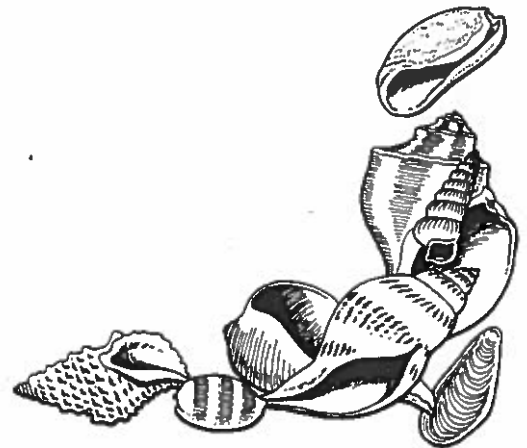
- SC Double Bubble (Chemistry of Soap)  
Just Plane Fun (Flight and Aerodynamics)  
Jelly-Belliology (Taxonomy)  
Incredible Edibles (Edible Plants)
- MA Geodome (Geodesic Dome Construction)  
Get Lost (Map and Compass, Orienting)
- HM Feed Your Face (Natural Cosmetics)
- SS The Oil Game (Sharing a Limited Resource)  
Revolution (Historical Simulation)

## SECOND CLASS

- SC Go with the Flow (Heart and Blood)  
Terrarium Construction (Cycles)  
Egg Drop (Package Design)  
Go Fly a Kite (Wind, Atmosphere)
- MA Countryside Measuring (Geometry)  
Up and Away (Hot Air Balloons)
- HM On the Air (Radio Broadcast Writing)
- SS Native American Games  
It's the Law (Criminal Justice)

## THIRD CLASS

- SC Crystals (Chemistry)  
Hot Air Balloons (Air)  
Pollution Solution  
Oh Rats! (Dissection)
- MA Polling (Graphs)  
Speed Boats (Stream Power)
- HM Woods Words (Poetry)
- SS Egg Babies (Responsibility)  
Dyeing Naturally (Dyes)



The preceding is a **SAMPLE** outline of courses for a group size requiring nine of our instructors. The specific courses offered vary with the time of year, location, current **Nature's Classroom** instructors, and goals the visiting school wishes to achieve.

**SC: Science**

**MA: Math**

**HM: Humanities**

**SS: Social Studies**

# Nature's Classroom at Lakeside, CT



*Camp Washington/All Saints Conference Center is located in historic Litchfield County in the foothills of the Berkshire Mountains. The 300 acres include hardwood forests, meadowlands, a pond, streams and historic countryside.*

## **DIRECTIONS:**

Take I-84 to Waterbury, CT. In Waterbury take Route 8 North towards Torrington. Take Exit 38 (Reynolds Bridge, Route 6, Route 109). Bear left at end of ramp, go under underpass. Take left at lights and continue to stop sign. Go **diagonally across intersection onto Route 109 (Black Rock School on your left)**. Continue on Route 109 to East Morris (intersection of Route 63). Go straight on Route 109. At stop sign in Morris (intersection of Route 61) continue straight on Route 109. Go approximately 3 miles (pass cemetery and lake), go up a hill. At the top of the hill turn left onto Kenyon Road. This turn can be difficult to spot, look for the Episcopal Camp sign. Camp entrance is about .5 mile on the left. Please park in the lot immediately on your left when you drive in.

If coming on Route 8 South: Take Exit 38. Take a left at the light. At next light, turn right and continue to stop sign. **Follow directions in bold above.**



**Kenyon Hall**



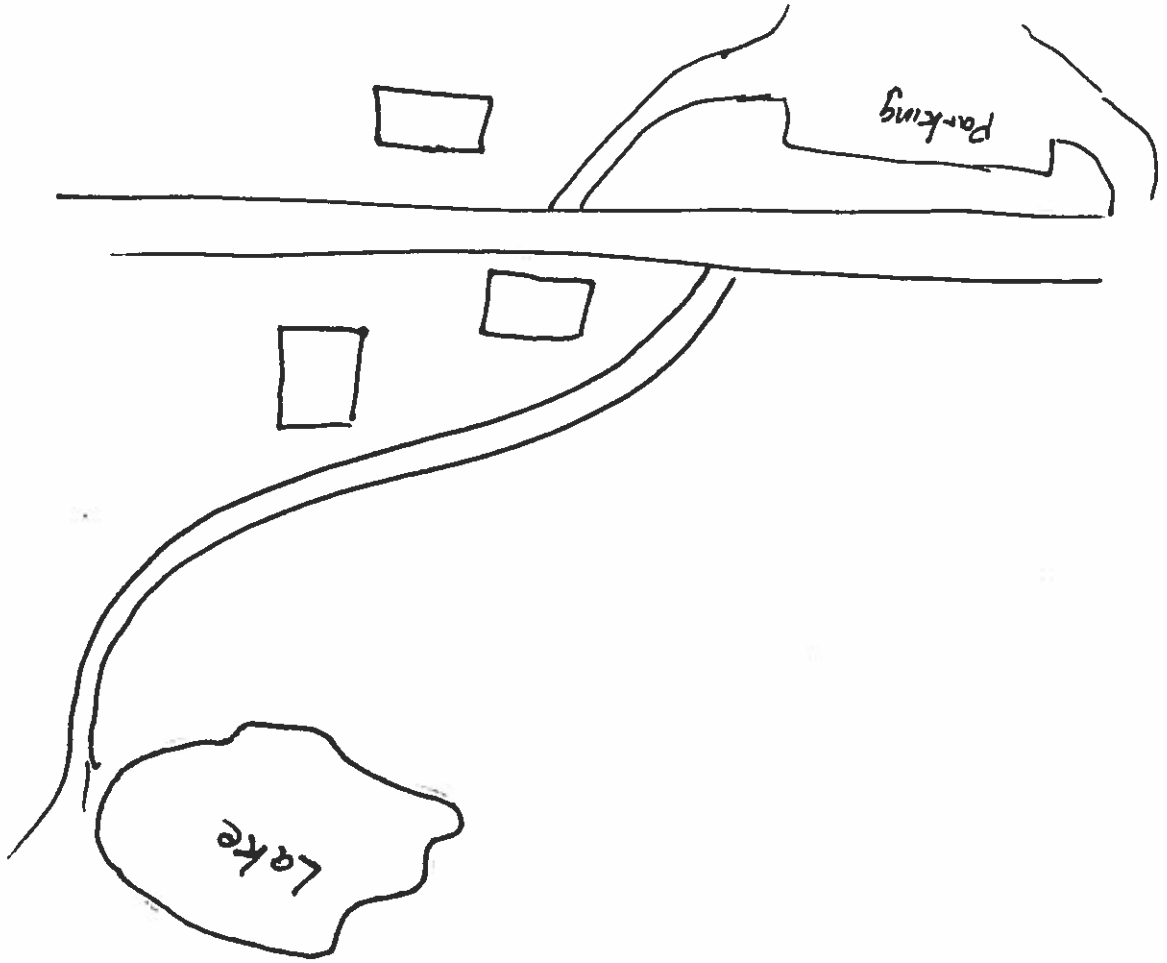
**Four Cabins:** Each housing 36 students; each side of a cabin housing 18 students with private room for the teacher.



Nature's Classroom  
Lakeside, CT

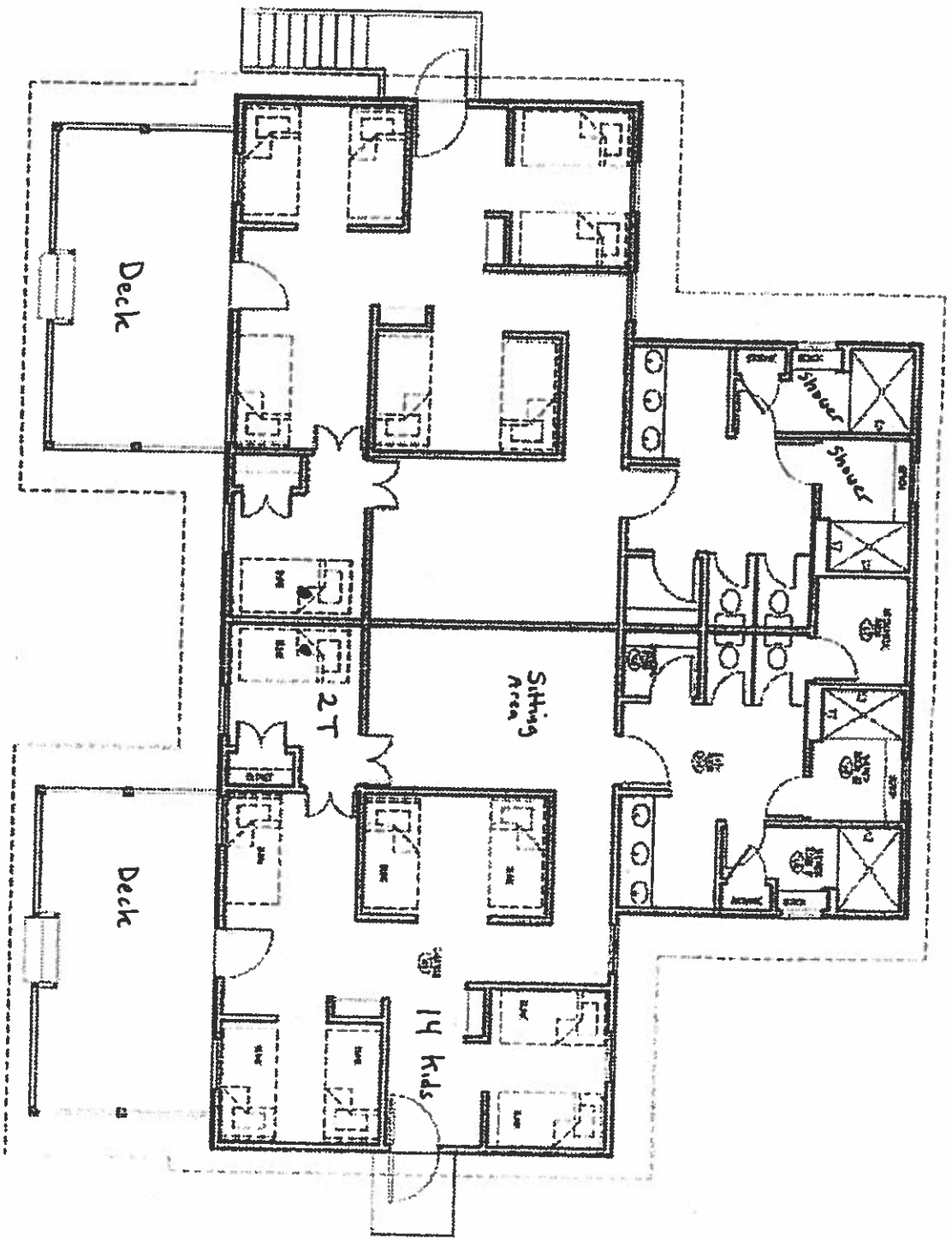
Fields  
&  
forests

Sport  
Fields



Kenyon  
Hall  
All  
Purpose

Basketball  
Volleyball  
area



CABIN FLOOR PLAN

CABIN 4  
 CAMP WASHINGTON  
 MORRIS, CONNECTICUT

## **DEAR PARENTS,**

Your child will soon have an opportunity to participate in a residential outdoor school program. This letter attempts to answer some of the questions parents usually ask. Please feel free to ask us about any other concerns you may have about the program. Outdoor environmental education uses the out-of-doors for learning experiences that cannot easily take place in the classroom. Students and teachers learning outdoor awareness in this extended classroom can use the experience to help in their understanding of the natural environment, their school subjects, and the way people live. The program includes activities such as examining life in lakes and swamps, investigating weather, Colonial and Native American skills, and confidence building group challenges. A variety of field walks, classes in all subjects, and evening activities insure an exciting, stimulating experience.

**SUPERVISION AND STAFF:** Students are supervised 24 hours a day. In addition to the classroom teachers and chaperones accompanying each visiting group, Nature's Classroom has a permanent staff residing on site consisting of a director, environmental teachers on 1:12 ratio, and a nurse, EMT or health staff person on call at all times.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY:** There is no requirement that students undergo a medical examination before attending Nature's Classroom. The program is physically intensive, however, and you may wish to consult your physician if there are any concerns that should be brought to the attention of the staff. Such guidance will assist them in planning the program of activities with the students. Please note any special health concerns on the Nature's Classroom medical forms. The forms **must** be completed before a student can attend. Health and safety are our most important objectives! A fully staffed and equipped hospital is less than 30 minutes away from all of our facilities. Every student is covered by insurance while attending the program.

**CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT:** A clothing and equipment checklist is furnished. Particular care should be taken in supplying ample footwear and pants, as students frequently participate in activities in wet areas. Clothes should be chosen for comfort and durability, rather than style. Please add or delete items appropriate for the season (gloves, hats, parkas, etc.)

**FOOD AND LODGING:** Meals are prepared by a permanent cooking staff and are served family style. Special dietary needs should be noted on the medical forms. Students, visiting teachers, and chaperones are lodged in winterized dormitories and cabins. Parents are welcome to visit any of our Environmental Education Centers and to view the facilities; such visits, however, should be made before or after your child's experience, preferably midweek. The physical facilities are always open, so a weekend visit might be possible. You must call the site and make an appointment with the Program Coordinator before coming.

**TELEPHONE:** The telephone is **not** available for the students' use, and parents are asked not to call students **except in case of an emergency**. The Nature's Classroom telephone number is **860-567-8403**.

**MAIL:** Mail is most appreciated by students, but to be safe, allow **4 days** for delivery. Mail posted midweek may not reach Nature's Classroom until Friday after the group has left (please make sure there is a return address in case we need to send it back). Please include the name of both the student and the school to assist delivery. Mail should be sent to **Nature's Classroom, 190 Kenyon Rd, Lakeside, CT 06758**.



# Nature's Classroom®

**DR. JOHN G. SANTOS, Director**

19 Harrington Road • Charlton, MA 01507

800-433-8375 • 508-248-2745 fax

[www.naturesclassroom.org](http://www.naturesclassroom.org)

## NATURE'S CLASSROOM INSURANCE COVERAGE

Many schools have been requesting additional information about the Nature's Classroom insurance coverage. The following has been compiled to help ease the minds of parents, teachers, principals, etc. Keep in mind, also, that before a child receives outside medical treatment, his/her parents are notified. Nature's Classroom is insured in the following manner:

### STUDENTS

\$2500 each accident/injury

\$ 750 each sickness

“Injury” means bodily injury to the child resulting directly and independently of all other causes in loss from accident occurring during the child's stay at Nature's Classroom.

“Sickness” means sickness or disease of a child which first manifests itself during the child's stay at Nature's Classroom.

The policy does not cover the following:

- pre-existing conditions. (For example: a child comes to Nature's Classroom with a cold; the cold worsens and medical attention is sought; payment would be the parent's responsibility.)
- intentional, self-inflicted injury.
- preventative medicines, vaccines, or medical examinations which are not necessary for the treatment of injury or sickness.
- repair, replacement, examinations for prescriptions or fitting of eyeglasses, contact lenses, or hearing aids.
- any dental work or treatment of natural teeth, cosmetic or plastic surgery not necessary for the repair or alleviation of injury.
- the repair or replacement of existing dentures, partial dentures, braces, bridges, or other artificial dental restoration.
- the repair or replacement of artificial limbs or orthopedic braces.

**NOTE:** This policy does not cover visiting teachers and other adult supervisors.