

# American Outdoor Schools



American Outdoor Schools' curriculum is designed to reinforce science concepts learned at school through experiential education, since studying the natural environment cannot always occur within the classroom setting. Students can increase their knowledge of the outdoor world through direct observation and exploration.

The Explorers curriculum concentrates on exploring our world in order to understand and appreciate the concept of interdependence within the ecosystem.

## 6th GRADE "EXPLORERS"

**Encountering the Ecosystem:** This class provides an introduction to the week of outdoor school. Students use their senses as they explore the natural world, developing an awareness of the various components of the ecosystem and their interdependence. Students also discover the many natural resources the ecosystem provides. CA Science Standards 5b, 5e, 6b, 6c, 7h

**Group Initiatives:** This class allows students to develop team-building skills such as cooperation, communication, and trust. Students are presented with a series of challenges, which require them to work together as a group. After each challenge, students are led in an assessment of their actions, roles, and use of cooperative skills. Focus is on a better understanding of living in a community with diverse members.

**Focusing on Foundations:** Students take on the role of scientists, discovering the essential components of soil, and how it is formed from both biotic and abiotic materials. Students investigate the dynamic processes of weathering, erosion, and decomposition, and learn how these natural phenomena shape the earth and allow life to exist. CA Science Standards 2a, 2b, 2d, 7b

**Exploring the World of Animals:** This class focuses on the relationships between animals and their habitats. Students explore the local area to develop an understanding of food relationships and energy flow in food webs. Population simulations, observations, and the graphing and interpreting of data help illustrate carrying capacities and resource dependency within an ecosystem. CA Science Standards 5, 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d, 7c

**Growing, Growing, Gone:** Plants play an essential role in the web of life as producers, converting sunlight into energy that other organisms can use. Through various games and an exploration of the camp's indigenous plants, students learn the importance of plants in our daily lives, and what plants need to survive and grow. CA Science Standards 5, 5a, 6c

**It Only Takes A Spark:** Understanding the reasons and circumstances in which a fire should be built is an underlying objective of this class. Students use the available natural resources to provide heat energy in the wilderness, working together to start and maintain a fire, with consideration of safety and wise use of resources. CA Science Standards 3a, 3b, 3d, 6b

**Rocks That Roll:** This class leads students to an appreciation of the importance of rocks and minerals to the ecosystem, and as a natural resource. Students perform basic tests to identify various minerals, and classify rocks based on how they were formed. CA Science Standards, 1a, 1d, 1e, 1f, 6c

**Developing Night Awareness:** The night hike introduces students to the world of nocturnal animals, focusing on how their senses are adapted to allow them to live in the darkness. By leaving the lights of camp, students discover more about their own senses, and listen for the sounds of the night. CA Science Standards 5b, 5c

**Finding the Way:** Students gain knowledge to help them avoid getting lost and find their way in the wilderness. This class teaches the skill of basic orienteering. Students learn to read and take bearings to complete a compass course, and utilize a topographic map to plan a wilderness trip. CA Science Standards 7b, 7f

**Wilderness Manners:** This session wraps up the outdoor school week through a variety of activities that challenge the students to analyze their role in taking care of the earth. CA Science Standards 6a, 6b, 6c