

Nassau BOCES Brookville Outdoor and Environmental Education Center

Welcome! Thanks for chaperoning your group today.

The Brookville Center is a 16-acre park that was formerly a NIKE missile base. Today we provide educational programs – low and high challenge courses, orienteering, survival, geocaching, colonial homestead ecology, and nature programs – for over 12,000 students and teachers each year.

See our website for information on these and other programs Nassau BOCES offers here, at Brookville, at Caumsett State Historic Park, on boats, and in your communities: www.nassauboces.org/outdoors

Today your group will participate in our **Challenge Course**, commonly known as “Project Adventure”. Participants will be guided through a series of initiatives designed to enhance classroom, family, peer, workplace, and other community interactions by:

- developing effective **communication** skills
- fostering **cooperation**
- drawing upon **critical thinking** skills
- developing **trust** through **fun, imaginative** activities in an atmosphere of **safety** and **respect**.

We operate on a philosophy of **Challenge By Choice**, which states that each individual decides his or her level of participation based on his/her own “comfort zone”. Rather than pressuring someone to do something, **we endeavor to create an environment of trust** that **encourages** and **invites** participants to expand their comfort zones, whether it be climbing a wall, walking blindfolded, or sharing a thought or feeling with the group.

As a chaperone, you have an important role today:

- please cheer and encourage, but **don’t give hints or answers**
- allow students to learn from their mistakes
- if you would like to **participate** in activities, speak with your naturalist as to what/how/when that would be best done
- **supervise** your group throughout the day, particularly **during lunch** and at the **end of the day** when loading buses
- assist your naturalist upon request in **spotting** activities
- work with the naturalist to help students **transfer the learning** to school and home

Reminders

- we prefer to have one chaperone with the same group at all times. If you must leave your group, please tell the naturalist
- allow BOCES staff to handle participant discipline unless otherwise asked
- please **keep side conversations out of earshot of participants**. This is **very distracting**.
- turn cell phones and beepers to vibrate (most will not work on this site)
- smoking is not permitted on our grounds. We can direct you to an appropriate area if needed

You will notice that our staff leads the group in a **debrief** of each activity and of the entire day. This is an **essential part of the program** that enables participants to **reflect on their experiences** and grow in their abilities to interact with others, plan, and transfer their learning to other environments. Please participate in these conversations, as you have invaluable insight from the perspective of parent, teacher, or other community member and are the person who will be “going home” with students and therefore able to extend the learning.

On the back of this sheet we have provided a **checklist** of things to look for as you follow your team’s progress today. Please use this to help in processing and **give it to teachers at the end of the day**. They will appreciate your attention and comments as they continue the learning back in school.

OEE/Brookville/Chaperoning checklist 5-16

Team Name (If used) _____

What is Really Going On?

You may see more than what is on the list or less. Every team is unique. Some successes are huge and some are small but all are important. Also keep in mind that what is important is the quality of what occurs with the group, not the quantity of activities that they do. Not all groups will do the same initiatives but they can share their experiences with each other back at school. Observe your group, and share your observations with the group at the end of the day if you like.

Give the checklist to the teacher at the end of the day.

- Members of the team get to know one another better. This is known as the *Forming Stage* of group development.¹
- The team sets a goal (*vague, or clear and specific?*)
- A time when the group struggles and can't seem to get it together. All groups pass through this *Storming Stage*. This is a natural part of the group development process.¹
- A student claims, "This is impossible!"
- Notice a time when the facilitator seems to ignore a discipline issue. Often facilitators will try to get the team to take responsibility for their own discipline.
- A time when the team may not complete a challenge, but are successful in achieving a goal.
- Students take on very specific roles such as team leader, idea giver, organizer, supporter, peace keeper. This is called the *Norming Stage*, and often follows *Storming*¹.
- The team applies a skill that they learned in a previous activity or challenge.
- Someone in the group who didn't have much to say (*or is shy*) begins to speak up.
- Students discuss how what they learned could apply to their everyday life.
- A time when you could barely keep yourself from giving the group a hint, and maybe you did. It happens to the best of us!
- The team completes a task that seemed impossible.
- A time when every student seems to be having fun.
- A moment when the team just "clicks" and begins to perform well together. This is known as the *Performing Stage*.¹
- A moment when an individual student has made a great personal accomplishment.
- A time when the team begins to bond together and support one another physically and emotionally.

¹Tucker B. & Jensen, M (1977) Stages of Small Group Development Group 19427

The "*Transforming*" stage is what occurs once you leave here and follow up today's activities to extend the learning. Think about ways you might be able to highlight your child's experience here once you return home. These connecting conversations and experiences at home are what result in true change and impact.