

Tips on Putting Together a MarineLab Program

The following suggestions have been drawn from teachers' experiences in coordinating a MarineLab program and are strictly the opinion of that teacher, whose is subject to the guidelines of their home school district. MarineLab is pleased to share these with you but accepts no liability (or credit, for that matter) as to their result!

Step 1: Have a plan ready for approval...

- Get colleague support
- Muster up some nerve!
- Present a plan including **itinerary, budget, and chaperones**
- Extensive planning makes it hard for administrators to say "no"

Step 2: Start preparing for the trip early...

- Try planning an all-inclusive trip where cost includes all meals, transportation, etc.
- Plan charter bus transportation on a smaller number of participants than are initially interested (to account for cancellations)
- Ask for non-refundable deposits and contracts from students
- Have students sign a commitment form after a deposit is received

Step 3: Incorporate the program into curriculum...

- Habitat ecology is covered by MarineLab program; consider presenting other lessons regarding the Florida Keys such as chemistry or physical oceanography
- Consider administering tests on MarineLab content
- Make participating in the trip contingent upon completing an assignment, such as an essay. If you are bringing a small group, use the essay to winnow out the 'deserving' students.
- **For teachers:** experiential learning is a great addition to a portfolio and as professional development

Step 4: Budget and Fundraising...

- Take a deposit from students in the beginning of the school year
- Arrange a monthly payment schedule for students throughout the year
- Consider a National Education Association (NEA) or National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) membership to account for personal liability
- **Funding Contests:** students can "win" funding
 - *Lexus Environmental Challenge* – www.scholastic.com/lexus
 - A listing of other awards at www.accessexcellence.org
- **Grants:** Some grants are provided for experiential learning programs
 - National Science Foundation

- **Fundraising** is great for parent involvement and teacher-parent interaction

Fundraising Ideas:

1. **coupon books** – local businesses pay to be advertised in the book, sell books for \$20-\$30 with coupons worth up to \$2,000, students get \$10 per book toward their trip
2. **cookie dough/treat sales** – sell by the tub through fundraising companies but avoid companies that require payment up-front
3. **local or chain restaurants** – eg: Outback, O’Charlies, etc., ask for a percentage of meals sold to go to students
4. **host events** – eg: Haunted House

Step 5: Enjoy your trip!!

Step 6: Evaluate program with students...

- Have students list positive feedback as well as “realistic changes” they would make
- Have students come up with an action plan that could be implemented to initiate changes in the program

Helpful suggestions

Charter Buses:

- **+Prevost** – “comfortable”, “good bus”, “climate control”
- **+VanHuel** – “good bus”, “good bathroom”
- **- MCI** – “tight seating”, “don’t use this company”

Chaperones:

- Avoid bringing parents due to a “conflict of interest” (parents’ priority may not be education based)
 - students tend to default to parents
 - parents are used to running trips their own way, while an overnight field trip is more structured
- Make sure all chaperone expenses are included in student prices, if your school system allows this!

Student Behavior:

- Arrange a “travel covenant” – violations lead to a ticket home