

1998

Learning Adventures Middle School: Guidebook for our Expedition of December 1998

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Learning Adventures Middle School

Guidebook for our
Expedition of
December 1998

Contents of this Guide

This guide follows our expedition of December 1998, as we all worked together to make our floor reflect the values and beliefs of our program. Students created individual reports and research to help document this expedition. Portions of their writing appear here to describe our trees, commons, services, sound barriers, murals, and wilderness themes.

Introduction

Learning Adventures Middle School is a new charter school, developed under the Community Learning Center model. We are also seeking status as an Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound school. We base our studies on the High Standards Graduation Profiles of the State of Minnesota and seek to provide students with the necessary skills to be successful in a high school setting.

Our Mission:

We channel the natural energy and curiosity of middle school students by emphasizing learning through experiences in the natural environment and community service.

Our Focus:

LAMS focuses on experiential education in the natural environment. We offer a richly stimulating learning environment for all learners. Learning focuses on the interrelated systems that make up our environment, both human and natural. Students undertake "learning expeditions," often involving fieldwork outside of the classroom, to explore the physical environment or to seek outside resources. Academic subjects are taught in the context of real-world problems, so students see the relevance of knowledge taught to the world around them.

Our Charter:

We are sponsored by Central Lakes College (Brainerd, MN) and function as our own school district within the state of Minnesota. We are guided by a board of teachers and parents; and we seek the active input of students.

Expeditionary Learning Design Principles

1. THE PRINCIPLE OF SELF DISCOVERY

Learning happens best with emotion, challenge and the requisite support. People discover their abilities, values, "grand passions," and responsibilities in situations that offer adventure and the unexpected. They must have tasks that require perseverance, fitness, craftsmanship, imagination, self-discipline, and significant achievement. A primary job of the educator is to help students overcome their fear and discover they have more in them than they think.

2. THE HAVING OF WONDERFUL IDEAS

Teach so as to build on children's curiosity about the world by creating learning situations that provide matter to think about, time to experiment, and time to make sense of what is observed. Foster a community where students' and adults' ideas are respected.

3. THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR LEARNING

Learning is both a personal, individually specific process of discovery and a social activity. Each of us learns within and for ourselves and as part of our group. Every aspect of a school must encourage children, young people, and adults to become increasingly responsible for directing their own personal and collective learning.

4. INTIMACY AND CARING

Learning is fostered best in small groups where there is trust, sustained caring and mutual respect among all members of the learning community. Keep schools and learning groups small. Be sure there is a caring adult looking after the progress of each child. Arrange for the older students to mentor the younger ones.

5. SUCCESS AND FAILURE

All students must be assured a fair measure of success in learning in order to nurture the confidence and capacity to take risks and rise to increasingly difficult challenges. But it is also important to experience failure, to overcome negative inclinations, to prevail against adversity and to learn to turn disabilities in opportunities.

6. COLLABORATION AND COMPETITION

Teach so as to join individual and group development so that the value of friendship, trust, and group endeavor is made manifest. Encourage students to compete, not against each other, but their own personal best and with rigorous standards of excellence.

7. DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY

Diversity and inclusivity in all groups dramatically increases richness of ideas, creative power, problem-solving ability, and acceptance of others. Encourage students to investigate, value, and draw upon their own different histories, talents, and resources together with those of other communities and cultures. Keep the schools and learning groups heterogeneous.

8. THE NATURAL WORLD

A direct and respectful relationship with the natural world refreshes the human spirit and reveals the important lessons of recurring cycles and cause and effect. Students learn to become stewards of the earth and of the generations to come.

9. SOLITUDE AND REFLECTION

Solitude, reflection, and silence replenish our energies, and open our minds. Be sure students have time alone to explore their own thoughts, make their own connections and create their own ideas. Then give them opportunity to exchange their reflections with each other and with adults.

10. SERVICE AND COMPASSION

We are crew not passengers, and are strengthened by acts of consequential service to others. One of a school's primary functions is to prepare its students with the attitudes and skills to learn from and be of service to others.

TREES AROUND OUR BUILDING

(start from the southeast corner and move counterclockwise around the floor)

1. The Green Ash shoots its seeds (that look like helicopters) away from the tree so it won't grow in the same spot. It can get to be 60 feet tall. The seeds can be about 3 inches long. The bark is light tan and has ridges. The leaves are green and are oval shaped. Insects like the sweetness of the leaves. *By Anthony Brannon*
2. The Paper Birch's bark is one of its original features because of its creamy white color. Another original part of the tree is its bright yellow leaves in the fall. The tree's height is about 40 to 70 feet. The leaves have an oval shaped body. The leaves are toothed and the end of the leaf is pointed. The Paper Birch tree has flowers that look like caterpillars, called Catkins. The Paper Birch is one of the most beautiful trees of the Native Americans and was used for things such as canoes, bowls, and medical uses. *By Alyssa Dickenson*
3. The American Elm is a majestic tree, long-leafed and great for cities. Its mature height is 60-75 feet. It has an umbrella-like, vase-like, feather duster-like shape. The bark is generally dark gray to gray-brown in color. The outer bark has broad intersecting ridges and rough flaky appearance. *By Tezra Sanchez*
4. Bitter Nut Hickory has tall, slender, straight green trunks. It has a broad and rounded crown with a diameter of 10 to 25 feet. Their height is 60 to 80 feet. The leaves are long and slender and finely saw toothed. They are yellow-green above and light green beneath, turning yellow in autumn. It has gray or light brown bark. *By Thomas Bell Jr.*
5. The Black Spruce sometimes takes a year for its stem to grow to one inch in diameter but in our region it grows at a more rapid rate. It is found in muskegs (shallow ponds), it's also found in dry uplands. The Black Spruce has strategies of reproducing itself, in the far north its cones remain closed and the tree may accumulate 20 years worth of cones with healthy seeds. If a fire burns the vegetation, the heat opens the cones, allowing Black Spruce to dump thousands of seeds on the ashes where they can quickly start. *By Theresa Henery*
6. Willows are wonderful trees especially the Weeping Willow because it looks like it is sad. An old Native American myth is when a young person or old person was sad they went to grandmother willow for advice. A Weeping Willow grows to about 40 feet, with long branches that sweep the ground with fine textured leaves. *By Rebecca Pentland*
7. The American Basswood *by Mathias Roxas*
8. The Norwegian Red Pine is the Minnesota state tree. Commonly they can grow to 60 to 90 feet. The needles on the tree are 4 to 6 inches. Its bark looks reddish brown, black, gray, and dark yellow. The branches grow only on the top of the tree! *By Kalin Crawford*

9. The Tamarack Tree is a fairly large tree with a pointed top. The needles are $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 inch. On longer sticks the needles are by themselves. The bark is dark colored and it flakes in small scales. The height is 40 to 80 feet and the diameter is 1 to 2 feet. The Tamarack is one of the only three coniferous trees in North America that lose their needles every year. *By Nicole Armstrong*

10. Red Maples cover approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of the state of Minnesota. The Red Maple can be considered a majestic tree, growing anywhere from 40 to 60 feet tall. It's not a small tree in width either; it has an average of $1\frac{3}{4}$ to 3 feet thick in diameter. The crown is compact and narrow though. The leaves can be as large as four inches wide. Unfortunately, though it is called the Red Maple, it is not this color year round. In the spring and summer it stays a nice shade of lively green. *By Shaya Clark*

11. The Quaking Aspen is one of the most wide spread trees in North America. The Quaking Aspen is a large tree. It has an average height of somewhere between 40 and 70 feet. Usual width for this kind of Aspen is anywhere from 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet. The bark is a dull green color near the ground. But it gets to be shiny and brighter towards the top of the tree. The leaves of the Quaking Aspen are somewhat heart-shaped. *By Nicole Brogan*

12. The Ginkgo tree is a kind of tree that spreads its leaves and has gray bark. Ginkgo trees can grow to 120 feet tall. Its leaves are generally fan-shaped, rough textured, and slightly thicker than other northern tree leaves. The Ginkgo tree is slow growing as a seedling but grows faster as it gets older. *By Aaron McCadden*

13. The Northern Red Oak can grow up to 75 feet high. It is native to the eastern half of the USA except the southern part of the country. In the summer the oak's leaves are a dark green and in the fall they turn red (hence the name). *By Nick Keplinger*

14. The Balsam Poplar is 60 to 80 feet tall. Its diameter is 1 to 3 feet. The leaves are 3 to 5 inches long. It lives in moist soils of valleys, mainly stream banks, sand bars, and flood plains. *By Dustin Plasch*

Our Commons Area

We have based our central commons area on the idea of town squares and the ancient forums of Greece and Rome. Here is some student information about the commons.

Chris' group observed the conservatory at Como park, and the plants that they saw in the building to get ideas for the commons are in our school. They went to Rice Park, Mears Park, and Town Square to observe there. Then they also researched the project that they were studying. *By Brandy Bell.*

Ancient Greece is the birthplace of democracy. It started out as simple town meetings then developed small city-states, then developed into a form of democratic government. *By Wilbert Jackson*

When Rome became a republic the people were determined that no person should have too much power. The Latin word "republica" means "belonging to everybody." However the people of Rome were not all equal. Women, slaves, and people who were not born in Rome were not considered citizens. Therefore, they could not elect their own leaders.

The citizens of Rome met in a group call the Comitia or an assembly. There were four assemblies in Rome. Officials were elected by the assemblies once a year. *By Aaron Summers.*

What kind of plants do we have in St. Paul and Minnesota? Cardinal flowers, Beebalm, Wild Pinks, Mallows, Shooting star, Thistle, Knot Weeds, Gerardias, Loosestrifes, Milkweed, Blazing stars, Vetches, Lobelias, Venus Looking glass, Bellflowers, Chicory, Gentians, Violets, Polemoniums, Woodsorrels, Yellow Coneflowers, Sticktight, Adderstongues, Yellow Orchids, Foxgloves, Mulleins. *By Valesha Brannon and Diamond Harris*

Sound Work

Mr. Ulrich's group studied acoustics in hopes that we could deal with the loudness of our floor. Here are some of the things they found out.

Acoustics is the study of sound and how to stop it from bouncing around. *Pakaditha Sekese*

Acoustics can be used in homes, concert halls, and gyms. *See Xiong*

Acoustics is needed to stop and absorb sound so sound won't bounce around ceilings and walls. *Toua Yang*

Well, some people use acoustic tiles and towels to make the voices stop the noises. *Yer Yang*

Noise pollution is unwanted sound. In fact, the word "noise" comes from the Latin word "nausea," which means sea-sickness. Noise is one of the highest pollutants today. The noise pollution is caused by road traffic, jet planes, jet skis, garbage trucks, construction equipment, manufacturing processes, lawn mowers, leaf blowers, and boom boxes. Noise is not only unwanted, it also negatively affects human health and well being. The problems that are related to noise include hearing loss, stress, high blood pressure, and sleep loss. *Rachael Chatmon-Wilson*

Sound intensity is loudness. The decibel is the unit used to measure sound intensity. Some common examples of different intensity levels are: leaves rustling and soft whispers = 10db; a quiet room = 20db; a quiet office = 30 db; regular talking = 50db; very loud music = 60db; a moving subway = 70db; and a full symphony orchestra = 90db. *Yer Yang*

Sound quality is a property of sound. For example, the quality of a tone is its special sound. Quality allows you to tell a tone played on a piano from the same note played on a flute. *Pakaditha Sekese*

Wave resonance is the response that an object has to vibrations that matches its natural frequency. *Donyea Collins*

Yellow Pages

Do you need something cleaned?

Find the **Cleaning Team!**

See Mike N. or Juan on the second floor, or contact Mr. Dean.

We clean tables and rooms and take out the garbage and recyclables.

We should keep a clean school!

If you need something repaired, find Teddy in his office in the basement near the music room.

Peer Mediation

You can contact Mr. Stringer, Ms. Dana or Brittany M., Brandy B., Mike I., or Veronique K. for help with your problems. Mr. Stringer's office is on the second floor – last office on the left. If you want to talk to someone who will listen to your conflicts, then try mediation, it works! You can find us in person or e-mail us.

Leadership Team

Who to contact: Dr. Jennings, Nancy Dana, Rod Haenke, and Chris Brown.

Student leaders meet on Fridays to plan special events for our school. If you want us to plan something for the school – find us!

Office Work Team: Providing service on the first floor in the main office, making copies, answering phones, organizing files and helping Kim Wells, our secretary. We help out! Talk with Lizzy Slatt if you want to help out too.

Visit the Nurse! She's certified! The Nurse's office is located on the second floor office hall to the left of the elevator. Ask for Gypsi Moon, the school nurse. Come here if you're hurt, need medication, or need screening or testing for your health.

Orientation Team: We teach with power! The Orientation team meets on Fridays across from the elevator in the front lobby. You can contact Sarah Summerstrum or other members of the team. Come here if you are new or need to know something about the school.

Newsletter Team: We write our weekly newsletter. Daniel is the group's editor. Contact him or one of the newsletter team if you have a story. We also provide news for the Community Learning Center Newsletter – See Michelle at the front desk for your copy! Share the News!

Fundraising Team: This team works on fundraising efforts for our school and is creating a school store. Find Mr. Ulrich for more information.

Attendance Team: Each Advisory has an attendance team member who will check you in for the day. If you come after 10:15 you should check in with Kim in the main office. The attendance team also works with our point collection and checking system. See them if you have questions!

Computer and technology services provided by the **Technology Team!** This group provides training and information on our computer network and programs. Contact Jeff Holte by email at jholte@mths.charter.k12.mn.us for more information. If you are having password problems check with Daniel for assistance.

The Serving Team: We help Serve the Lunch! Contact Maria Rios in the lunch office – on the basement floor. We can feed you!

Your Teaching Team:

Chris Brown – society and cultures teacher

Daniel Swenson-Klatt – English writing, reading and speaking teacher

Tim Ulrich – science teacher

Math teacher to be hired

Lizzy Slatt – educational assistant

Miranda Gray – educational assistant

Korey Dean – educational assistant

Peg Gaitan – academic support

Mary Weber – social work support

Kevin Stringer – behavioral support

Karen Stiles – music and band teacher

The Midway YMCA – physical education support

Murals and Artists

Our job was to paint murals with nature scenes on different walls. We did that because we wanted some more color and character in the school. We also wanted everybody to learn more of what it is like to work as a community.

First we took a field trip to downtown St. Paul where we visited the Children's Museum and the Landmark Center. We gathered ideas for murals and artistic styles. We had to do a questionnaire to get people to think more about nature. We read books on artists, picked out projects for each person, read quotes, and picked the ones we wanted to use for different murals. We also picked out which artists' styles to use and what colors we would use. We had to figure out how to project the pictures and sayings on the walls. Then we had to figure out how to work together. Everything from there went well and each project was completed one by one with everybody's cooperation. *Michael Irei and Monique Kellogg*

The mural we have been working on is of a forest. We wanted the forest we painted to look something like Henri Matisse would draw. It took us about four days of hard work to finish the mural. It got really tiring sometimes, but we stuck with it. As research, we had to look through some biographies on him to find out how he liked to paint, so we could imitate his style. We also got some good pictures he drew off the internet. We then had to make copies of the Matisse forest and display them on the overhead to copy down the design. We painted the background red, and used the quote, "Artists paint the sky red because they know it's blue," by Jules Ffier. *Kira Krown, Kabao Vang, Teanna Collins*

Our group set out to paint a prairie scene in the style of Van Gogh. We anticipated that the project would take only a few days, but the days stretched out to be a full week. It was a long process including these steps:

- We looked in the book *Van Gogh: His Life and His Art*.
- We sketched a similar piece on paper, then on the far-left wall.
- We painted the background of the sky and the prairie.
- We repainted the sky to a lighter blue than the original.
- We went over the background using the small strokes of Van Gogh.
- We decided to use clouds because we wanted to minimize the small detailed work on the sky.

The hardest parts of the project were making the small detailed strokes in the sky and deciding what to do to make the prairie look more realistic. *Anna Reiff, Ngange Akale, Eric Quiroga*

We used Jackson Pollack as our artist because our whole group likes his style; which is considered abstract expressionist. We made a splatter lake scene. It has a weeping willow on its bank and we painted it from a shore view. To start off we made a few sketches and then chose the best one. After that we sketched it on the wall then painted the background solid colors. When that was dried we splattered it. Then it was done.

Jackson Pollack is one of the greatest artists of the 20th century. He splatter painted because he could not get his pencil to do what he wanted it to when he sketched. *Allison Kirby*

Wilderness Stories

Not Just Any Trip

About a half a year ago I went on a camping trip. This was not just any camping trip; this was a canoe trip to the Boundary Waters. This was the kind of trip that showed if you could handle taking care of yourself; if you could live without TV, shelter, and other conveniences of everyday life. It separated the children from the adults. At the time I was more of a child.

From the first day of our journey, we had to canoe for hours on end, eating gross powdered food that we had to finish for energy. (I heard of a group that had run out of food, so each person had to eat a plain stick of butter just so they wouldn't starve.) The hardest part of the whole trip for me was when we had to portage. The adults had to carry the canoes on their backs, while we had to carry packs that weighed more than ourselves for half a mile through broken ground and fallen trees.

The voyage was three days long. To me, it seemed like an eternity. I was very happy when I could go home. But I wasn't the same person I had been when I had first gone on the trip. In some way, in that three days, I had grown more than I could have in a year.

Kira Krown

Wolf

It is evening, and I am quite hungry, as are the others in my pack. We smell deer not far from where we are; we make a plan to catch it. After only 20 minutes we catch it. First I eat then leave and let the others finish it off. Very full and energetic, I lead the pack around our territory, through the forest of pine, following the river.

I am the Alpha Female. I have dark black fur and blue eyes. My pack is made up of nine, we are a successful pack. We do a good job at keeping our territory and even makings it larger.

We walk first, then speed up to a run as we reach a waterfall. We stop and look up to see an owl, flying around, trying to spot a fish. The pups jump up pretending to catch it.

We start walking again and stop as we edge the shore of the river, and get splashed by the waterfall. The pups go swim, while we watch them and rest.

It is a wonderful place to be all sorts of trees, and lots of animals to watch, such as the chipmunk and squirrel, also the bear and birds. The streams, river, and waterfall are all beautiful, with colors of the rainbow going through them like swimming fish. *Anna Reif*

Student Profile

Students in our school reflect the St. Paul public school district population in diversity and ability levels. We aim to be an inclusive school that is able to be successful with **all** students.

Our Daily Schedule

Monday through Thursday

9:30 to 10:00 Crew (students are expected to be in their advisory area – working on team building activities / individual projects)

10:00 to 10:45 Academic Class Period 1

10:45 to 11:30 Academic Class Period 2

11:30 to 11:45 Circle Up (all students meet in the Commons Area for announcements and concerns and a short, social, break time)

11:45 to 12:30 Academic Class Period 3

12:30 to 1:00 Lunch Break

1:00 to 1:45 Academic Class Period 4

1:45 to 2:30 Crew (team building, journal writing, free reading, group games, social skills)

2:30 to 4:00 Expedition (also work in Physical Education and Music)

4:00 to 4:30 Crew (reflection /assessment and journal writing, clean up)

4:30 Dismissal

Fridays

1:00 to 1:30 Crew (independent book reading for all staff and students)

1:30 to 3:00 Clubs (current offerings include: Chess, Art, Spanish, Yearbook,

Our Behavioral Expectations

All students and staff are expected to:

1. Respect yourself and others.
2. Do your best work.
3. Create a caring community.
4. Challenge yourself.

Curriculum Plans for 1998-2000.

English

Grade 6 – Writing process, biography, surveys, reviews, and personal correspondence. Daily communication and problem solving as a group. Works of fiction and literary terms.

Grade 7 – Focus on autobiography, case study, opinion, and technical writing. Personal speaking and forms of business speech. Technical writing, the glossary and the parts of textbooks.

Grade 8 – Historical narrative, ethnography, literary analysis, and essay writing. Formal speeches and interviews. Comprehending non-fiction material, structural organizers and be involved in in-depth research writing.

Science

Core emphasis will center around themes examining:

Life Science: Characteristics of life, Simple organisms, Botany (plant study), Vertebrates, Ecosystems / biospheres

Matter / Energy: Atomic structure / table of elements, Compounds and mixtures, Force / energy / work, Physics of heat and sound

Earth / Space: Earth and space make-up and dynamics of movement, Earth's atmosphere, Meteorology (weather), The water cycle

Human Body: Structure and movement, Nutrition, Body systems, Safety

Society, Culture, and Heritage

Grade 6: Discovery and exploration theme. Discovery of new places both past and on-going. Read biographies of past explorers and meet present explorers and look at future explorations and discoveries. Work on the Magellan project.

Grade 7: Cultures of the world theme. Build on exploration skills by looking at the diversity around them in an immediate sense in their own community as well as in the broader global sense.

Grade 8: Mississippi River theme: Examine the role of the Mississippi River on our historical development as well as in our present. We will look at history, geology, environment and the other interconnected features of the river system.

Math

Grades 6, 7, and 8 will focus on the state standards for math that are tested as the 8th grade basic skills. These skills include: Number sense; Shape, Space and Measurement; Chance and Data Handling; Patterns and Functions; Algebraic Functions; and Technical Applications of Mathematics. Students who have reached this level may connect with the upper level classes taught in the high school program.

Expedition Plans

Here are some of the expeditions we have been preparing for. These will be offered each year as either grade-level, interest-group, or advisory-group expeditions.

Playwriting Project: teaching the skills of conflict resolution while students write and produce a play.

Building for Birds: students study local birds and their feeding and shelter needs.

Words from the Woods: a creative writing class that focuses its attention on the woods.

Wolf Study: radio telemetry and tracking a pack.

Properties of Snow: over-night winter camping in tents and snow huts, snowshoe building and snowshoeing.

Fishing: fish habitat, and the fish of the coral reef (at the Minnesota Zoo).
Collect and Disperse seeds for prairie restoration project for the DNR.

Bikes, Boards, Blades: creating a small-scale bike shop and repair center. Also cross country skiing and biking outings.

Building a Canoe: a long-term project that may include other boat building projects.

Photography: focus on picture taking techniques, lighting, backgrounds, depth of field, film speed, aperture, etc.