



September 1, 2009

Dear Third Grade Teacher,

Time to make a Splash! Your field trip to the Environmental Learning Center (ELC) is coming up - get ready for the adventure! This year there are many changes, to the field trip and the previsit. Mainly, your previsit may now be done at your leisure with the video.

Attached are teacher instructions, a letter to parents, and a letter to chaperones. Only bring **three chaperones**. Before offering anyone the chaperone "job," make sure they have read the letter and understand the expectations. **No one should be surprised to learn that everyone will get wet and dirty** ☺. Everyone's (including teachers' and chaperones') shoes and socks will get wet during our pond study.

Before your trip:

- Verify field trip date with Assistant Principal.
- Go to ELC's website for prep activity. [www.DiscoverELC.org](http://www.DiscoverELC.org) (under "See Your Eco," click on For Teachers)
- Watch previsit video
- Go over vocabulary (p1).
- Go over ELC Rules (p2) and What to Wear (p3).
- Discuss lunch and how to pack a **minimal waste lunch** (p3).
- Send letter home to parents (p5) and to chaperones (p6).

Day of trip:

- Have everyone wear sturdy nametags.
- Organize lunches for each class into separate laundry baskets, boxes, coolers
- Arrive at the ELC at 9:30 am and leave at 1:15 pm.**

Feel free to call me if you have questions. Thank you for helping provide a safe and fun learning opportunity. We appreciate your support.

Sincerely,  
Heather Stapleton  
Education Coordinator  
(772) 589-5050 or [Heather@DiscoverELC.org](mailto:Heather@DiscoverELC.org)

## **Environmental Learning Center Field Trip Teacher Instructions – 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade**

*One day's exposure to mountains is better than a cartload of books.* – John Muir, 1872

The Environmental Learning Center (ELC) field trip is a high point in the school year for third grade students. At the ELC, they learn about nature by exploring the Indian River Lagoon ecosystem. Experiences focus on the main themes emphasized in the ELC's curriculum for third grade, ***Splash 3: The Web of Life and Natural Cycles***. (There should be a copy of this curriculum in your classroom; if not, contact Sue Curtis, Director of Elementary Education.)

### **The Goal of the Field Trip**

To provide a positive, outdoor experience that will promote awareness of the environment and inspire interest in learning about the world around us. Hands-on learning is heavily emphasized. We hope that the trip will leave a lasting impression of good environmental ethics and stewardship.

### **Preparing Students for Their Adventure!**

The more prepared students are when they come, the more they will get out of their ELC field trip! You can greatly increase the impact of the learning experience by doing at least one activity from the first two activity sections in ***Splash 3***, entitled *Awaken Enthusiasm* and *Focus Attention*, before your students come out.

Vocabulary introduced during field trip. Please introduce these to your students:

brackish	carnivore	consumer	decomposer
detritus	energy	food chain	habitat
herbivore	metamorphosis	nutrient	observation
photosynthesis	precipitation	producer	scavenger

Doing follow-up activities from the section entitled *Share Inspiration* in ***Splash 3*** will enhance the value of the learning experience. See p. 7 for a summary of the 22 activities, organized by main theme, and for activity recommendations for tight schedules.

### **Pre-Visit**

Before your field trip, watch the ELC Field Trip video. This will help prepare you and your students for the field trip. During the 35-minute program, you and your students will learn about your field trip. You and your students will construct two energy pyramids using land-based and marine-based food chains found in the Indian River Lagoon ecosystem (using vocabulary from the list above). You will find this activity (instructions and student worksheet) on our website at [www.DiscoverELC.org](http://www.DiscoverELC.org) (click on "For Teachers" under "See Your Eco" on the right side of the page).

## Chaperones

We realize that the ELC field trip is a popular one for parents, **but each class is limited to three chaperones** (in addition to the teacher). **If you have any special needs students, please call Heather Stapleton at 589-5050 prior to your trip.** And please encourage all parents to visit the ELC later with their children as their guides! There is no admission fee!

Chaperones should serve as role models during the field trip, maintain discipline, and help the students and Naturalist as needed. **They may not bring any children not enrolled in the class.** On page 7 is a letter to prospective chaperones that outlines their responsibilities. Please read the letter yourself, and make a copy to give to each person interested in the “job.”

## Field Trip Activities

During the field trip, your students will:

- ✓ explore the mangrove forest
- ✓ observe the food chain in action
- ✓ learn about detritus/soil
- ✓ learn about conservation and stewardship
- ✓ play the energy game
- ✓ collect and observe critters from the pond
- ✓ get to know our wonderful Indian River Lagoon

## ELC Rules

Good student behavior is as important on the field trip as it is in your classroom. Please review with your students the ELC Rules:

- ✓ Have fun.
- ✓ Be respectful.
- ✓ Listen and follow directions.
- ✓ Keep your shoes on. Always!
- ✓ Watch for fire ants and splinters!
- ✓ Have fun☺

Make sure parents know what the field trip will involve. Send home a copy of the parent letter found at the end of these instructions. Encourage your students to eat breakfast on the morning of the field trip so they have plenty of energy for the day’s adventure.

**School buses arrive at the ELC at 9:30 am and depart at 1:15 pm.**

## What to Wear

During the field trip, all activities take place outside. **Students, teachers, and chaperones must wear closed-toe and closed heel shoes, and clothing that can get wet and dirty. Water shoes, sandals, and Crocs are not acceptable.** For safety reasons, anyone not wearing appropriate footwear may not be allowed to participate in all activities. Everyone's shoes and socks will get wet when we do our pond study. We generally get wet only up to our knees. Shoes must be kept on at all times. Dress appropriately for the weather – we will come inside during storms, but will stay out in light rain.

Please have everyone wear sturdy name tags. This allows the Naturalist to interact on a personal level. Be prepared to divide children into groups or buddy pairs when needed.

Water and restroom breaks will be provided during the trip. No one should have food or drinks with them while walking around the ELC. Should a child need to use the restroom outside of scheduled breaks, an adult must accompany him/her.

Teachers are responsible for administering first aid, tending to any child who has allergic reactions, and handling any special medical conditions. Make sure that the Naturalist and chaperones are aware of any such conditions. A first aid kit will be available.

## Lunch

Please combine lunches in containers (coolers, boxes, clothes baskets) for transport and organization. **Please make sure you or your chaperones can carry these.** Lunches for each class must be packed separately. Children should not carry their own lunches. Lunch is between 10:45 and 11:30 am.

ELC emphasizes conservation and stewardship, including the Triple R Philosophy: **Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.** After lunch, we will sort our trash, separating recyclables (plastic containers marked #1 - #7, glass, cans, paper bags) and compost (fruit and vegetables) from the garbage. The students will weigh their trash and graph their results.

Challenge your students to bring lunches that produce minimal waste. Note that aluminum cans can be recycled, but chip and beverage bags (for example, Capri Sun) cannot. Here are some other suggestions:

- ✓ Put drinks in plastic bottles with screw-on lids that can be reused.
- ✓ Bring naturally packaged foods (hard-boiled eggs, bananas or apples).
- ✓ Bring food in reusable containers that can be taken home and reused.
- ✓ Ziploc bags and plastic utensils can not be recycled. Bring a lunch box that you can take home and reuse.

We emphasize that 1) leftover food could have been Reduced by remaining at home, 2) sturdy containers can be rinsed and Reused, and 3) certain materials can be Recycled.

Once again, we will be hosting a least trash challenge for the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classes.

## After the Field Trip

Take advantage of student enthusiasm after the trip by doing follow-up activities to reinforce what your students learned during the trip. The six activities in the *Share Inspiration* section of ***Splash 3*** are designed to do just that.

You may also have students create story maps to show the sequence of activities they did on their field trip. The maps can be illustrated with pictures and included in student nature journals.

Another idea is to have students collectively create a single thank you card for the Naturalist and Naturalist Assistant. Save paper by making a single card rather than sending letters from each student. Students can be assigned different tasks: making drawings, lettering the card, and pasting on art. The card could even be shaped like a fish! There is lots of room for imagination.



September 2009

Dear Parent,

The field trip to the Environmental Learning Center (ELC) is a high point in the school year for third grade students. They learn about nature by exploring the Indian River Lagoon ecosystem. Hands-on learning is emphasized, and activities take place outside. The goal is to provide a positive, outdoor experience that promotes awareness and inspires interest in the environment. Your child's adventure will be on \_\_\_\_\_.

- Your child should eat a good breakfast so s/he has plenty of energy.
- Your child must wear closed-toe and closed heel shoes, and clothing that can get wet and dirty. **Water shoes, sandals, and Crocs are not acceptable.** Everyone's shoes and socks will get wet when we do our pond study.
- Dress your child appropriately for the weather, especially on cold or rainy days. We come inside during storms, but stay out in light rain.
- Apply sunscreen and bug repellent to your child before the trip.
- Make sure the teacher is aware of any allergic reactions or any special medical conditions your child may have.

We emphasize conservation and stewardship of our natural resources. This includes the Triple R philosophy that encourages all to Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. We discuss that 1) leftover food could have been **Reduced** by remaining at home, 2) sturdy containers can be rinsed and **Reused**, and 3) certain materials can be **Recycled**. Please help by sending your child with a lunch that produces minimal waste. You can do this by 1) putting food and drinks in plastic containers that can washed and reused; 2) including foods that are packaged naturally such as hard-boiled eggs, bananas or apples; and 3) not giving your child prepackaged meals (**which have a lot of packaging**).

Thank you for your help in this wonderful learning adventure! Entrance to the ELC is free, and we encourage you to come back with your child and let him/her be your nature guide ☺.

Sincerely,

Heather Stapleton  
Education Coordinator



September 2009

Dear Prospective Chaperone,

The field trip to the Environmental Learning Center (ELC) is a high point in the school year for third grade students. They learn about nature by exploring the Indian River Lagoon ecosystem. Activities take place at our dock, in our fresh water pond, and along our mangrove boardwalk. Hands-on learning is emphasized. The goal of the field trip is to provide a positive, outdoor experience that promotes awareness and inspires interest in learning about the world around us. The trip will also leave a lasting impression of good environmental ethics and stewardship.

**Chaperones play a vital role during ELC field trips. Your role is to promote a safe, successful learning experience and to help where needed. The responsibilities:**

- Serve as a role model. Your full attention is expected. Be enthusiastic!
- Supervise all children at all times. Should a child need to use the restroom, outside of scheduled breaks, an adult must accompany him/her.
- Participate in all activities, including wading in the pond to help with collections. **You will get wet and dirty.** Dress accordingly and wear closed-toe and closed heel shoes. **Water shoes, sandals and Crocs are not acceptable.**
- Serve as disciplinarian and help children follow rules:
  - Have fun.
  - Be respectful.
  - Listen and follow directions.
  - Keep your shoes on. Always!
  - Watch for fire ants and splinters!
  - Have fun☺
- Keep students together, and close enough to hear the Naturalist.
- Refrain from smoking.
- Put cell phone on vibrate or turn off.
- Help take lunches off of bus upon arrival at the ELC.
- Do not bring children **not enrolled in the class.**

Should you decide to accept this important “job,” please notify your child’s teacher.

Sincerely,

Heather Stapleton  
Education Coordinator

## Activities from *Splash 3: The Web of Life and Natural Cycles*

The more prepared students are when they come to the ELC for their field trip, the more they will get out of their adventure! The 22 activities included in your *Splash 3* curriculum are organized below according to the main themes they teach.

We know you are on a tight schedule! **If you only have enough time to do two activities before your field trip to the ELC, we suggest doing Indian River Lagoon Food Chains (#4, p. 33) and Food Chain Mobiles (#5, p. 39). If you don't have time to do the activities themselves, try to go over the vocabulary in Producers, Consumers, Decomposers (#12, p. 85), and go over the background information in Missing Milkweed (#3, p. 27) and Decomposition Columns (#9, p. 63).**

If you only have a little time after the field trip, have your students complete the activity booklets you will be given for each child, and do Mangrove Motel (#17, p. 115) and Magic Mud (#19, p. 121) from *Splash 3*. Other post field trip activities develop writing skills (The Outdoors: Springboard for Writing, #20, p. 127) and art skills (Nature Mobiles, #22, p. 133) using nature, and build on activities in the student activity booklet (Splash, #18, p. 119).

The food web theme explores how energy is transferred and transformed as it moves through the food pyramid and emphasizes the importance of plants to all life on Planet Earth. Several activities illustrate this theme.

- Pyramid of Life (#1, p. 17). Build a human pyramid with “plant” students on the bottom and “animal” students on the top.
- What’s for Dinner? (#2, p. 23) Trace the flow of energy for different types of food all the way back to plants.
- Missing Milkweed (#3, p. 27). Did you know it takes 1000 pounds of plants to support 100 pounds of mice, which can support 10 pounds of snakes, which can support only 1 pound of eagles? Illustrate the idea of energy transfer using butterfly larvae by weighing the larvae and the food before and after the food is eaten.
- IRL Food Chains (#4, p. 33). Use 12 representative food chains from the Indian River Lagoon to make paper food chains. Good introduction to important vocabulary.
- Food Chain Mobiles (#5, p. 39). Create mobiles using templates provided.
- Bucket Brigade (#13, p. 93). Play a game using buckets, water, and sponges, that illustrates the inefficiency of energy flow through the energy pyramid.
- Webbing (#14, p. 97). Create a food web using a ball of string to connect plants and animals, each played by students.
- Beezels and Bubs (#15, p. 103). Play a game that illustrates how food resources may be limited and how the fittest animals survive.
- Mangrove Motel (#17, p. 115). Learn about mangroves and the important role they play in the Indian River Lagoon by creating a poster with all the animals that depend on them for survival.
- Magic Mud (#19, p. 121). Play a game using predators, detritus eaters, and food tokens to learn about the importance of detritus in the Indian River Lagoon, and how important this estuary is to our local economy.
- Building a Food Web (#21, p. 129). Create a food web using students as plants and animals.

Natural Cycles theme – energy cycling through matter.

- Cycles that Recycle (#8, p. 57). Learn how nature recycles through the processes of growth and decay by cultivating mold and bacteria on food.
- Decomposition Columns (#9, p. 63). Create mini compost piles in plastic soda bottles. Excellent background information on decomposition, bacteria and fungus.
- Dinosaur Air (#10, p. 71). Determine how much surface area of plants is needed for students to breathe for one day. Learn how atoms are recycled and plants photosynthesize.
- Producers, Consumers, Decomposers (#12, p. 85). Use different habitats found throughout the world and list the kinds of producers, consumers, decomposers and scavengers found in each.

Natural cycles theme – water cycle.

- Liquid Leprechaun (#11, p. 77). Create a mini water cycle using a pot of boiling water.

Additional activities teach through scavenger hunts (Scavenger Hunts that Teach, #6, p. 41) and encourage good stewardship by examining how trash injures wildlife (Litter We Know, #7, p. 49).

Note also the Glossary and Recommended Books sections at the end of *Splash 3*. Several of the books are available for check-out from the ELC library.