

# Best Practices for Field Days

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# Best Practices for Field Days

- Our Success
  - Hoosier Outdoor Experience
    - Student Day
    - Weekend general public event
- Best Practices - a quick overview



# Hoosier Outdoor Experience (HOE)

- Public Event
  - 25 sponsors: totaling \$120,000
  - 600 volunteers
  - 12,700 participants
- Student Day
  - 300 volunteers
  - Nearly 700 students



# What is a Field Day?

- A multi-station field trip in which participants rotate through multiple presentations



# Do participants really learn anything?

Research shows that fields days:

- Are fun for participants
- Can have positive impacts on attitudes
- Can result in knowledge gain



# Best Practices for Field Days

- University of Minnesota Extension Service
- Attended a 3 day training
- 6 broad best practices



## 6 Best Practices

1. Marketing
2. Theme
3. Assess your audience
4. Plan your setting
5. Experiential teaching methods
6. Program Evaluation



## Marketing

- Helps to design a program that meets participants needs
- Effectively informs them of its existence
- Explains why it is important to them
- Direct marketing- geared toward getting participation from your target audience



## Direct Marketing: Practical Tips

- Determine the modes of communication for target audience
- BUDGET!!
- Careful review of materials
  - Peer review
  - Target audience review
- Employ multiple channels of promotion
- Plan for evaluation
  - Which ways worked best for audience assessment
  - Who supported the event
  - How did participants hear about it?
- Record and track your marketing strategies

## Using HOE as an example

- An important first step – develop the plan
- Adult marketing data
- Target audience
- Research, evaluation of marketing, etc



## HOE – Marketing Plan

- We hired a marketing firm to help us:
  - Develop our goals and objectives
  - Understand our audience
  - Brand the program for this audience
  - Provide us with a road map to reach our goals
- We took the information
  - Developed a funding strategy
  - Outreach plan
  - Program guidance for all our partners

## Before and After the Marketing Plan



## Theme

- Research shows
  - Participants can only retain limited amounts of information
  - Grouping related information helps
  - Students have trouble remembering > 5-9 ideas



## Effective Themes



- Summarize the main ideas
- Answer the “so what?” of your message
- Usually are complete sentences
- Relate to participant’s lives
- Presentations relate directly to the theme

## Theme Planning Process

- Identify a topic that best meets the needs of presenters, educators, and participants
- Distill the key message that you want to communicate about this topic
- Develop no more than five presentations that support your key message.
  - Breaks into sub-themes and learning objectives

## Theme Guidelines

- Include the theme in the name and advertising of your field day
- Introduce the theme at the opening event
- All events, stations, and activities should support the theme
- Each event, station or activity should have its own sub-theme that supports the overall theme
- Have five or fewer supports for the theme
- The closing event should return to the theme

## Begin with Clear Learning Objectives

- Good learning objectives:
  - contain specific information, attitudes, and skills students need to understand the theme
  - build from participants understanding of the theme
  - can be tested
  - Encompass different levels of learning (ie: define, demonstrate, calculate, diagram, assess, predict)
- Introduce objectives at the beginning of each presentation
- Test your success
  - Reminds participants of key information
  - Provides you measure of how well your presentation worked


## Bloom’s Taxonomy of Education Objectives

- 1956 book, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals*
- Defined 6 levels of learning objectives
- Each level associated with a range of “action verbs.”
- Using these 6 levels, ensure participants aren’t just re-stating information presented

Objective Level	Action Verbs	Potential Projects
1. Know	Tell, list, define, describe, record, name	Lists, timelines, facts, charts, notes, recitations
2. Comprehend	Discuss, outline, explain, interpret, identify, restate, translate	Pictures of ideas, re-tell in own words, flow charts, paintings, summary reports
3. Apply	Solve, show, construct, demonstrate, illustrate, classify	Models, maps, solving a similar problem in the same way
4. Analyze	Analyze, distinguish, compare, contrast, categorize, separate	Data graphs, research reports, lists of conclusions, conducting/summarizing surveys, groups of ideas/objects
5. Synthesize	Invent, create, compose, imagine, propose, formulate, devise	Inventions, creating metaphors, writing songs/poems/cartoons, etc., solving a problem in new ways
6. Evaluate	Assess, judge, justify, debate, recommend, rate, predict	Criteria lists for judging problems, mock court-cases, rules lists, panel discussions, predictions of the future

## Let's play a game!

- Good theme
- Bad theme



## Assess Your Audience

- Foundation of effective planning, marketing, and teaching
- Research shows:
  - Strive for equity rather than equality
  - Many kinds of diversity- culture, race, gender, diet, learning style, etc
  - Human brains develop through a series of stages
  - Males and females develop differently
  - Culture and ethnicity affect our perceptions of time, space, reasoning, verbal messages, social roles, and interpersonal relations
  - Background and experience affect what we determine to be worth learning
  - People favor different ways of learning


## Things to Consider:

- Ages & Stages of Child & Youth Development
- Adult Learners
- Multiple Intelligences
- Gender Development
- Cultural Characteristics
- Special Needs




## Ages & Stages

- Karns & Myers-Wall's (1988)
- Studied the physical, social, emotional and intellectual growth of children from ages 6 -19



## Adult Learners

- Used to running their own lives
- See you as an expert, not an authority
- Mature and experienced
- Other important things going on



## Adult Learners

### So you should do the following:

- Tell them about yourself, your expertise and qualifications as a presenter
- Ask them to share their background
- Plan flexible presentations with plenty of backup activities
  - involve them in shaping your final presentation
- Focus on practical activities, skill building, discussion
- Avoid information overload
- Provide handouts they can take home
- Try to create a relaxed atmosphere where they feel comfortable sharing and relating their own experiences

## Multiple Intelligences

1. **Linguistic:** reading, writing, speaking
2. **Logical:** reasoning, argument, calculating, problem solving
3. **Visual/spatial:** creating mental & physical images, maps, etc
4. **Musical:** music, tone, rhythm
5. **Kinesthetic:** movement, balance, manipulation of objects
6. **Interpersonal:** working well with and seeking to understand others
7. **Intrapersonal:** self-reflection, understanding, control, action
8. **Naturalist:** connecting with and understanding the natural world

## Gender Development

- Research shows males and females learn differently
- Females Metaphor of Silence- “finding a voice”
- 1<sup>st</sup> day of school, average male is developmentally 2 yrs behind the girls in reading and writing
- Takes boys longer to learn names for things
- Boys are slower to develop impulse control

## Cultural Characteristics

### General Considerations for Multicultural Audiences:

- Be flexible. Starting and/or ending “on time” may or may not be more important than waiting for everyone to arrive.
- Start by asking indirect questions “Can someone answer...”
- Avoid pointing directly at individuals or charging them with misbehavior in front of the group
- Have patience to wait for answers
- Direct eye contact may make some groups uncomfortable
- Match your animation and emotion to your participants
- Ask participants to consider the group and themselves when making decisions or answering questions
- Be especially respectful to older students and authority figures

## Special Needs

### Things to Consider:

- **Physical Impairments**
  - Consider wheelchair accessibility, ask before touching a person's wheelchair or crutches
- **Deaf or Hearing Impairments**
  - Important for them to see presenters face, animate your body more, enunciate clearly, include lots of visuals or other sensory items
- **Visual Impairments**
  - Introduce yourself vocally to the group and personally to the individual, call participants by name, vocally describe things you show or do, try to incorporate touch, smell and sound, do not pet or touch a guide dog
- **Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)**
  - Avoid long lectures, minimize distractions by putting away or hiding visuals, model or items until you need them, involve restless learners, encourage your learners to complete activities in small groups

## HOE - Teacher comments from Student Day

- “lessons were right on level for third graders, they got and they loved it”
- “Loved the hands-on and engaging activities”
- “it was AWESOME! What a great learning experience”
- “we are always referring to our natural resources through geography and science and now they have a good hands-on example to connect with”



## Plan Your Setting

- Research shows:
  - Event and presentation settings should be designed to facilitate the activities being presented
  - Participants should feel a sense of safety and belonging
  - Presenters and the event design should exhibit behavior consistent with the theme
  - Children in new environments are distracted and must expend energy to learn about their surroundings before they are ready to attend to tasks and learn
  - An appropriate site can actually improve learning. However you must beware of overdoing it
  - Layout of the setting should follow established behavior patterns of participants

## Nature Fears & Discomforts

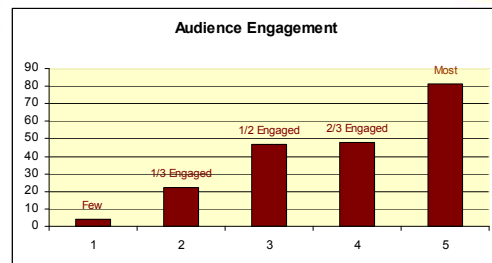
- Some participants may be uncomfortable in natural settings
- Those who perceived natural areas threatening tend to seek out familiar things



## Risk Assessment

- You can never be too careful!
- Brainstorm all possible risks
- 3 major hazard factors:
  1. Environment:
    - Outdoors: rain, thunderstorms, snow, muddy spots on trails, downed limbs, beehives, etc.
    - Indoors: staircases, closets with cleaning supplies, boiler room, etc.
  2. People: running, pushing, throwing, allergic reactions, leaving the group, entering off limit places. Also consider people not directly involved in the event like a divorced parent
  3. Equipment: scissors, saws, knives, glass, chemicals, etc
- Identify safety protocols, rules, first aid supplies and other ways of dealing with all identified hazards

## HOE Data



## Experiential Teaching Methods

- Experiential education= engages young people, creates a fun, hands-on environment and helps students apply their new knowledge in other settings
- Experiential learning= when a person is involved in an activity, looks back critically, determines what was useful or important to remember, and uses this information to perform another activity (Carlson, 1998)

## Experiential Teaching Methods

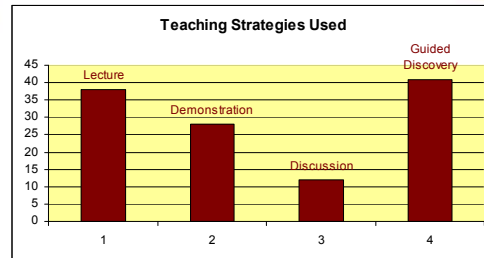
- Research shows:
  - Field trip experiences tend to create short-term memories rather than long-term memories. Repeated references to field trips may enhance long-term retention
  - Learning involves integration of new information with what we know or believe
  - Hands-on activities can lead to minds-on or learning
  - Self discovery helps youth to become engaged in learning
  - Reflection is critical for engaging learners
  - Relevant real-world experiences enhance learning

## Experiential Learning Model

1. **Experience:** Introduce and allow students to complete an activity. Allow them to make their own decisions.
2. **Share:** Ask students to describe what they did, learned, and felt during the activity.
3. **Process:** Have students identify common threads of the experience. Ask them to determine what was most important about the experience.
4. **Generalize:** Ask students the personal question, So what? How is the experience meaningful to student's lives? What information could they use in their own lives?
5. **Apply:** Have students apply the skills gained from the experience in a new situation. Ask them to describe how they can use what they have learned.

- Pfeiffer & Jones, 1981

## HOE Data



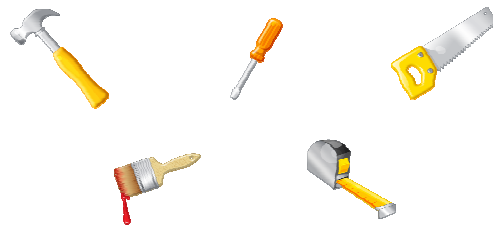
## Build a Lesson Plan

1. Statement of relevance
2. Statement of learning objectives
3. Focus activity
4. Introduction
5. Body
6. Assessments
7. Transitions
8. Conclusion



## Let's do an activity!

- Building your lesson plans



## Evaluation

"After ten years, you would think we are doing everything perfectly."



## Evaluation

- Two basic forms:
  1. Formative: identifies ways to improve the program
  2. Summative: measures the program impact
- Use multiple methods to assess multiple sources

## Developing Evaluation Focus Questions

- Good evaluation plan begins with a few BIG questions you want to answer about your field day
- Includes both the people you want to question and the things you want to ask them



## Example Focus Questions

- What did students learn about being a good citizens at the Hoosier Outdoor Experience?
- What did teachers like/dislike about our field day? Why?
- What do presenters think students liked/dislike about the field day?
- What key messages about our event are most important to teachers?
- Does our theme reflect an important community issue?
- Are our field day presentations inclusive of students with different abilities/learning styles/cultures/genders?
- How does our event layout support the theme?

## Evaluation Methods

- **Personal Interviews**
- **Focus Groups:** exploring key players' feeling and beliefs
- **Observations:** watching, recording and analyzing peoples' behaviors/interactions and/or the event layout
- **One-shot Survey:** Recording and analyzing peoples' responses to a one-time written or verbal set of questions
- **Pre/Post Survey:** recording and comparing peoples' responses to a set of questions asked before and after
- **Written Statements:** asking individuals for written response to questions and analyzing their answers
- **Authentic Assessments:** measuring peoples' performance of skills related to your event

## Practical Tips for Creating Surveys

- Make sure each question helps answer an evaluation focus question

### For example:

Q: Getting involved in community work is important.  
(use ranking scale: 1 -5, 1 is strongly disagree, 5 is strongly agree)

This answers focus question: How does participating in our event affect students' attitude toward civic engagement/environmental service?

## Practical Tips for Creating Surveys

- Make sure questions are clearly written
  - Follow Robert Peterson (2000) KISS principle: **Keep It Simple Stupid**
  - Avoid using jargon, scientific or technical terms
  - Do not leave room for interpretation when asking people to take a survey

### For example:

To what extent...how much/how well...

## Practical Tips for Creating Surveys

- Make sure that people taking your survey truthfully answer your question
  - Don't ask for too much information
  - Don't assume things about people

### For example:

List all of the important ideas

I wash off my boat at the shoreline before leaving a lake...how well to you agree that it is important...

## Practical Tips for Creating Surveys

- Use the best format and scale for your survey questions
  - Choose open ended or close-ended questions
  - Pick your scale to force choice or show a range
  - Make sure your scale is balanced
  - Make sure people understand your scale

## Evaluation and Assessment of HOE

- Student Day
  - Surveyed students, teachers, presenters and volunteers
  - Conducted program assessment and observation using Minnesota Best Practices guidelines
- Weekend
  - Surveyed participants both pre/post event
  - Conducted follow-up focus groups with activity providers

## HOE Weekend Survey Results

- 85% Excellent rating of the event
- Less than 2% gave us an unsatisfactory rating
- 45% of attendees were infrequent or non users of DNR properties or activities
- 85% of participants tried an activity for the first time
- And 86% of these stated they were likely to participate in these new activities in the next 12 months.

## Summary

1. Marketing
2. Theme
3. Assess your audience
4. Plan your setting
5. Experiential teaching methods
6. Program Evaluation



## Questions

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