

Student Reflections about Adventure Education and Community Stewardship

Adventure Education

Every year I have gone to EAS, each expedition has been different. There are always new people to get to know better – and to discover their true personality. Because we are away from the school atmosphere and out in the wilderness, people often act more like themselves. The things I have gained most from my expeditions this year are stronger friendships. –Chaia

On our expeditions I am always hoping to get into groups with all my friends, and not with someone that gets on my nerves. But on all three expeditions this year, I have gotten to know so many people that used to bother me or who I didn't even know – and I've had a blast! I know if we had been just at school I probably wouldn't have taken the time to really introduce myself and talk to them, so these trips have made me more aware of other people and their feelings. You can't really ignore someone, or leave them out, once you get to know them. –Hayley

The school trips, or “Adventure Education”, this year has proved to be far more exciting and fun than any of my previous trips with EAS. Our year started with a one-week excursion to Camp Hamilton. This is a special week devoted to meeting and reuniting with friends. New 6th graders who travel through the rustic gates can never exit as strangers after the week at camp.

...After camp, the school year passed with frightening speed. In no time we were signing up for our March Trips. I chose to go biking in the San Juan Islands. The week started off well, with the group making average biking speed. As the week progressed, we were able to go further and further, conquering distances and massive hills we would not have been able to do a few days before.

...Our spring camping trip was especially enjoyable this year because it did not rain as much as in previous years. The most fun part of the trip for me was standing on the bowsprit of the Sophia Christina in full sail.

...As Adventure Education concludes, I will surely miss the crisp smell of the morning, the feel of a sail at my back, and the increasingly bad hair days of everyone around me!
-John

Grade 9 is a big step and push for me. I don't think of myself as much of a leader, and I don't usually think people will want to follow me. I had to push myself to be in this role. Camp started differently – and I felt better about being a leader after the leadership retreat with the other 9th graders. The next day all of the students arrived. My group was not a group I would have chosen – I was actually kind of angry and disappointed. It was an extra leadership challenge and I had to get over it. By the end of the week, I realized what cool people I truly had a chance to work with!

I played a very important role in camp life this year. I was a motivator, leader, and encourager – and I did pretty well in my opinion. At my last year at camp I tried my hardest to enjoy my time and to be more optimistic and positive about things.

Camp Hamilton really changed me the first year, and now as I leave, I feel like a new person brought through the intense training – even though, half the time, camp life was like a vacation. I think it is important for someone to go through something like this, something that tests your leadership and patience. It helps people understand what the rest of their life will be like. It prepares them. I personally am prepared to take on the world. I leave EAS knowing that I will work easily through any problems and difficulties life throws at me. –Patrick

As I look back on all of the adventures I've been on with EAS, I'm so grateful to have had the opportunity to do things that the "average" junior high student may never in a lifetime get to do. At the end of my 7th grade year, I was able to go on a hike around Mt. Rainier with EAS students and teachers. While on that trip, I slept under the stars every night, hiked to the top of a valley, had lunch under a glacier, was eaten alive by mosquitoes, swam in 40 degree water, and pushed myself to my physical limits. –Daniel

During the past four years of my life, Adventure Education has provided me with an opportunity to be more open, to welcome new friendships, and to strengthen my ties with my current friends. Our Bowman Bay trip this year left a mark on me that will never be erased. EAS has taught me to always live in the moment. I believe that these words of wisdom have helped me to fulfill this chapter of my life, and will help me to meet the challenges of high school. At the final ninth grade campfire, when I was singing and Laura was strumming the guitar, I realized that as we continue our journey through life, nothing can undo the friendships we've created here. –Caitlin

Here at EAS we are all very blessed that we have the opportunity to go on so many great school trips. This year being my last, I got to view my trips from the perspective of a leader. Bowman Bay was a great example of this. I worked with two other 9th graders as the leaders of a group of thirteen. We had to make sure everyone was where they were supposed to be and doing what they were supposed to be doing. It was a great experience.

I got to see everyone's new discoveries and growths throughout the five days. Reliving my first year on the Sophia Christina, through a new sixth grader in my group, was a great moment in my life; I will never forget it. I love that at EAS we learn so much about each other and ourselves. We get the chance to test different parts of our own personality. Each of the activities at camp is designed to challenge different parts of our selves. Leadership, teamwork, determination, and hard work is running through each and every one of us when each day is done. We all seemed to have pulled together to sail a boat, carve a bar of soap, start a fire, or whatever else EAS staff can throw our way!
-Cheyenne

At the beginning of this year we had Camp Hamilton, where, for the first time in four years, it rained. Not just a little rain, oh no – it poured every day for the whole week! You could say that we were all rather miserable. But I learned that if you, as a leader, make sure that you are happy and having a good time (even if you really aren't) then everyone else in the group will enjoy themselves no matter what. I guess you could say it's contagious. -Vicki

On the Bowman Bay trip, my group got to dock up to an island and explore it. With six others I agreed to go on a hike around and over the island. Parts of this were the steepest climbing I've ever done. At the top of each hill, my muscles were tight and I was out of breath. Near the top of one hill, I was about to collapse. But I could see it...the top, that is...and said to myself, "If you stop now, you'll regret it. Think how proud you'll feel when you finish this!" On that climb I was the only girl in the group, and sure enough, when we got back to our starting point, I felt extremely proud and accomplished! -Verity

Besides leadership, I think that Adventure Education at our school adds something else. It adds a sense of camaraderie between students and respect for each person. Because we are out of our usual surroundings, and exposed to all the elements, we all must come together, to help each person get through. Whether it is sitting close to someone to keep them warm in the cold, or helping someone overcome a fear they encounter in one of the rotations, everyone has a better understanding of each other's qualities and can therefore appreciate every person for who they are. It is hard to explain the closeness of this school, but it is evident that the Adventure Education program has something to do with it!
-Teresa

Through Adventure Education I have become a stronger person both mentally and physically. When climbing the wall at Camp Hamilton, I learned where my comfort zone was and what helped me to go beyond that zone. I learned through experiences of

climbing that my friends and classmates cheering me on was a big factor in helping me get up that wall. At Bowman Bay, during initiatives, my group members helped me out and our whole group succeeded. I learned what it means to use teamwork in a large group. As a 9th grade leader at Bowman Bay this year, I felt like a camp counselor and learned how to make things fun when people are in bad moods and how to make learning fun, too. As a result of my twelve weeks of Adventure Education I have a greater education about the whole environment in the Pacific Northwest. I learned about the ecological differences in environments existing in the northwest, and especially about marine life in Puget Sound. This has sparked my interest to continue this kind of learning.
-Morgan

Community Stewardship Projects

In Community Stewardship Projects I've done many different things to help the environment. I've worked with 3rd graders, teaching them about native plants and wetlands. I've helped build a trail, cleaned garbage out of a stream, planted native plants, and taken out our non-natives, such as the ever-growing Himalayan Blackberry. In my time at EAS so far I have done a lot to help the local environment, and on a bigger scale, the world.

In my first Community Stewardship Project this year I helped to make a trail at a park in Woodinville. When we are done, this trail will have interpretive signs and will be open to everyone in the community. First we picked up trash, then cleared the brush to make a trail. Cutting through blackberries and brush wasn't easy, but it was fun. By the end of the session we still hadn't finished, but the next group will continue. And then there's next year, and the year after than – and until we finish that trail there will always be another year! –Nicole

During my last rotation of Community Stewardship Projects I helped create and put together interpretive signs that we put up along Bear Creek at Classic Nursery in Redmond. We drilled and sawed every Friday – and then we took the signs and used posthole diggers to dig holes for setting up the signs. These signs tell about the wildlife and plants. They help the thousands of people who walk the trails each year know what they are seeing and what they can look for. Many people walk these paths every year and our signs and trail-building there have brought more people to the area. That's when I realize that I've helped my community and world thrive. –Anna

As long as I can remember, I've had a love for horses. When I got a chance to go to the Little Bit Riding Center as my Community Stewardship Project, I jumped at the opportunity. The Riding Center has over 150 disabled riders. Every Friday, my group would do anything that needed doing, including: auction preparation, bulk mailing, stall cleaning, horse preparation, tack cleaning, and arena raking. Before going there, I didn't really feel motivation to volunteer anywhere, but now I see how much difference one person can make!

This year in the Organic Gardening Community Stewardship Project I helped to build three raised garden beds at the Joshua House foster home. We planted an array of vegetables and herbs in the garden, built chicken-wire compost bins, and created a step-stone path to the garden. While the residents at Joshua house benefited from the garden they would be able to look after, we got to learn how to build raised beds with protective training walls, assemble cloches, plan a crop rotation garden, and build compost bins. Random acts of kindness and cloches make the world go round. –Laura

In the Community Stewardship Projects group, Backpack Naturalists, we taught third graders from Thoreau and Sandburg Elementary Schools about our local environment. We did this by involving them in games that simulated situations that happen in nature. I was assigned seven children and led them around to the different stations my classmates had set up. By teaching others and helping them become more aware of their natural world, I indirectly help the environment myself. –David

This year I worked to restore the natural habitat around O'Denny Creek, clear the debris left by this winter's storms at school, and helped to build and prepare the school's new greenhouse. At O'Denny Creek I helped to clear the non-native species from the area around the creek's outlet into Lake Washington. I also helped to pick up garbage left in the park. At school, I picked up fallen branches, cleared debris from our wildlife habitat, and restored plants that were devastated by the storm. Finally, I helped to move the greenhouse to its new location and cleaned and repaired it. In short, I have worked to better the environment for people who visit O'Denny Creek, to make the school's campus more appealing, and to help our environment in general by giving the plants the school propagates a healthy place to grow.