



Y M C A

CAMP POTAWOTAMI

OUTDOOR EDUCATION TEACHER'S PLANNING GUIDE



Revised and Updated Spring 2026

Teachers, Parents, and School Administrators:

Thank you for choosing YMCA Camp Potawotami (Camp) Outdoor Education experience!

This guide has been created to assist you in planning a successful and enjoyable outdoor experience at Camp. Camp asks that you read through this guide whether you are a new or returning school as some of the information has been updated including schedule layouts and class choices. **Please pay special attention to the Teacher/Chaperone ratio and cost information on page 3.**

Our curriculum combines natural science, team building, and outdoor recreation skill classes. We will work with you in order to design a program specifically to fit your goals for your students.

Camp has been helping students to learn and grow in an outdoor setting since 1966. Staff and teachers have been first-hand witnesses to the difference that a visit to Camp can make. After their Outdoor Education experience at Camp, students will have a better appreciation for the natural world, new outdoor skills, enhanced group relationships and stronger personal ties with classmates and teachers.

In addition to this guide, enclosed is information for teachers, students, and parents. Please feel free to use and/or duplicate any of the forms found within.

Enjoy looking through our planning guide and if we may be of further assistance, please don't hesitate to contact us at (260) 351-2525. We look forward to working with both you and your students.

Sincerely,

Delanie Norman
Program Director
YMCA Camp Potawotami
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BUSINESS POLICIES

Camp Dates: Because of the demand, it is our recommendation to retain the same dates for each school from year to year. Any school that would like to change the dates of their experience will be handled to the best of our ability to fit them into the Camp calendar.

Billing: Our billing is based on the confirmation number on the contract. Any change of numbers must be provided **two weeks** before your group arrives at Camp. You are required to pay for the minimum number of students listed on your contract or the actual number of students attending, whichever is greater. Please check your contract for your expected minimum number. A non-refundable deposit is required when reserving a camp date. The balance will be invoiced to the school two days after the program has ended and is due 10 days after your experience.

Teachers/Chaperones Ratio and Cost: To help ensure an adequate adult to student ratio, Camp allows 1 adult for 10 students to come to camp for free. The ratio of 1 free adult per 10 students applies to teachers and school staff only. All other adult chaperones would need to pay for the trip. Chaperones play an important role in the Outdoor Education program, but sometimes having too many distracts from the students experience. We recommend 2 to 3 chaperones for each group of students. At Camp, we call students "flag color groups". We recommend flag color groups of 10-15 students.

Quiet Hours: Quiet hours at Camp are from 10pm -7am. To help ensure these hours are being kept, all evening programs will end by 9:45pm.

Students With Disabilities: Camp welcomes all students. All our buildings are wheelchair accessible. Many of our activity programs can be adaptable for all our guests, including those with disabilities. Please contact the Camp office to discuss individual student needs.

CAMP FACILITIES

Camp is a fully modernized resident camp that meets or exceeds standards set by the American Camping Association and the State of Indiana. It is maintained and cleaned by full-time maintenance personnel and inspected biannually to pass strict safety and health guidelines.

Sharples Center: This large dormitory is the main housing for our Outdoor Education groups and includes two wings that sleep up to forty people each, and is fully winterized. A large meeting room, can be used for many activities. Restroom facilities are located in both wings. A comfortable chaperone room with four beds and a private bathroom is adjacent to each student area in each wing. Sharples Center is also equipped with a small kitchenette.

Heller Hilltop Lodge: Has six rooms, each sleeping six with their own private restroom and shower area. The building has a commons area with a fireplace, tables, and chairs. Sleeps up to 36 people

Jorgensen/Pastura Lodge: These newly built lodges have the capacity to sleep 28 people in each building. It has two rooms that sleep 14 people each. There are restroom facilities for each room. The buildings also have common areas with two tables and benches in each building.

Lawrence Lodge: This brand-new lodge can sleep up to 32 people, split between two sides. The building has a large common area with two tables and benches. The singular restroom connected to the common area includes 5 single stall toilets with floor to ceiling doors and 6 showers all with private floor to ceiling doors and changing area.

Arrowhead Lodge: Our completely winterized dining hall can feed up to 160 people. Arrowhead's large floor area and stone fireplace make it multi-functional space for games and activities. Restrooms and complimentary coffee for adults are located within.

Lincoln Lodge: Lincoln Lodge is a small environmental education classroom.

Recreation: Activities include soccer, kickball, Gaga pit, 9-Square in the Air, and the Mole Hole slide. Basketball courts, sand volleyball court, and the baseball diamond are always popular sites for action.

Food Service: Our food service staff takes pride in preparing great meals that keep you going throughout your visit. Camp tries hard to accommodate as many food allergies and special dietary needs as possible and we need your help to accomplish this. We ask that you appoint an adult Dietary Officer that is responsible for being knowledgeable of the dietary needs within your group and ensuring that the specialty prepared meal is provided to the correct individual within your group. Please contact Camp for further questions about dietary needs.

MEDICAL

First Aid and CPR Qualifications: Schools are responsible for first aid, medical care, and emergency transportation. We ask that you identify the adult Medical Officer within your group to be the go-to for medical needs and first aid within your group. Camp does have CPR/AED and First Aid certified staff, but strongly recommends groups have an adult on duty that is qualified in First Aid and age appropriate CPR/AED. In case of an emergency, Parkview Noble Hospital of Kendallville is only 15 minutes away. All prescription medications are to be kept in a locked container and distributed by the school staff.

Participant Liability Waiver: A liability waiver is **REQUIRED** for each student, chaperone, AND teacher who attends the program. Please bring your forms with you when you arrive at Camp. The forms will be kept in the Camp office. We recommend that the group leader collects and keeps the following information on hand in case of emergencies while at Camp:

- Names
- Addresses
- Ages of all participants
- Emergency contact names and phone numbers
- A listing of any person with known allergies or health conditions requiring treatment
- Restriction, or other accommodation while at Camp
- Signed permission to seek emergency treatment or a signed religious waiver.

TRANSPORTATION

Parking: All cars and vehicles are to be driven on roads and parked in designated areas. Please do not drive on lawns or walking paths without authorization of Camp Personnel. Please observe the speed limit of 15 mph or less.

Non-Emergency and Emergency Transportation: A school vehicle for transportation of non-emergency medical issues is highly recommended. EMS is available in LaGrange County by calling 9-1-1. The closest emergency medical facility is Parkview Noble Hospital in Kendallville, Indiana.

EMERGENCIES

Missing Person/Emergency: A safety orientation will be provided upon arrival at Camp as soon as all members of the group are present. A Camp staff member should be notified immediately in the event of an emergency. The group should reassemble at the flag poles with their flag color groups. In the event of a missing person, YMCA staff will conduct a search of the premises. Camp staff will give further instructions as needed.

Severe Weather: Camp staff are trained in severe weather response and will review procedures with your group during the safety orientation. If severe weather requires your group to take shelter, a staff member will escort your group to the nearest shelter area. For main camp, the shelter area is in the Kanga Room located beneath Arrowhead Lodge. In Sharples Center, the shelter area is in the building's bathrooms. In Heller Hilltop Lodge, the shelter area is in the bathrooms of the front two cabins or the

cabins on the left and right of the building. In Jorgensen, Pastura, and Lawrance Lodge, the shelter area is in the building's bathrooms.

MISCELLANEOUS

Group Sizes: Camp can accommodate a variety of group sizes from 20 to 150 students. Students are divided into working groups called "flag color groups" for class time. The number of flag color groups will be based on a ratio of 1 group for every 15 students.

Schedule: Programs for schools will vary depending on the length of a stay. Camp will organize and run one evening program for each night the group is at Camp. If a group is here for a day program (usually 9am – 3pm), their only meal at Camp (lunch) is provided by Camp. If a group is here for an extended day program (usually 9am – 8pm), then **students bring a sack lunch for the first meal of the day** and Camp will provide the remainder of the meals. For further extensions of programs, including all overnight options, students bring a sack lunch for the first meal of the day and Camp will provide the remainder of the meals.

Chaperones: It is the responsibility of the school to obtain chaperones to spend nights in the cabins with the students. These chaperones may be parents, school staff, or teachers. Camp strongly recommends screening all chaperones. Minimum screening should include a check of the National Sex Offender Registry but may include other screening procedures such as interviews, references, and background checks.

Pets: Animals may not be brought to Camp without permission from the Executive Director. Only service dogs are allowed on Camp. Please let the office know if a service dog is coming to Camp.

High Risk Areas: High Ropes, Zipline, Challenge Elements, Teambuilding facilities, the waterfront, the ranch, the archery range, and the rifle range require a trained Camp staff member to supervise the activities. These facilities are off limits without a staff member.

Alcohol and Smoking: Alcohol and smoking are not permitted anywhere on camp property.

Rule of Three: Camp requests that whenever a student needs to go anywhere that three people go. This could mean the student and two chaperones go or the student, a second student and a chaperone. This rule is to help ensure everyone's safety while at Camp.

HB 1608: In Response to Indiana House Bill 1608, which went in to effect on July 1st, 2023, YMCA Camp Potawatami will formally inform the designated school group leader, whether verbally or in writing, if a student or minor requests of a Camp staff to be called a different name or gender pronoun than what that Camp staff knows to be their name or pronoun used/known to school representatives.

Supervision: No student can ever be left alone while at Camp. Adult supervision is required at all times. Maintain the Rule of 3. At no time should two students, nor a student and an adult, be in a 1 on 1 situation.

Classroom teachers and chaperones combine to meet recognized standard ratios of adult leaders to students. The American Camping Association recommends for each group the following supervision ratios:

Adult:Child Supervision Ratio
4-5 Years 1:5
6-8 years 1:6
9-14 years 1:8
15-18 years 1:10

The Camp staff is actively involved in guiding scheduled programs throughout the day and evening, with chaperones and teachers present during the entire time and night to provide 24 hours of supervision.

Property and Equipment: The Camp provides basketballs, volleyballs, and soccer balls for the use of groups while at Camp. No weapons are to be brought on to the Camp Potawotami property. Camp is not responsible for damages to or injuries from personal sports equipment or animals at Camp. During scheduled recreation periods, Camp will provide staff for a limited number of activities that will be identified on the group schedule prior to arrival. Groups are responsible for providing adult supervision for all other recreational opportunities.

OUTDOOR EDUCATION CLASS LIST

Living History

Pioneer Living

Students will spend the first part of the class learning the history of pioneers. After an understanding of what makes someone a pioneer, students will then take part in a life size Oregon Trail, which will teach students the history and lifestyle of pioneers. Activity will include role-playing, buying materials, and traveling on the Oregon Trail.

Candle Making

Students will learn about the history of candles and pioneering energy usage and how candles were used for light, heat, and many other things. Students will make their own candle using traditional methods.

Environmental Education

Lake Study

Many unknowns will be discovered in this class as students collect a variety of aquatic invertebrates from our lake. Using collecting nets, students will sort through lake vegetation, which offers food and shelter for the tiny aquatic animals. Students will identify the lake life they have collected using keys.

Wetlands

Camp Potawotami is fortunate to have over 20 acres of wetlands to study and explore. In this class students will learn the importance of these areas, as well as the problems that threaten their survival. Through a discovery hike and additional activities, ecosystems, food chains, and plant and animal species will be introduced and identified.

Tree Study

Students will discover what it takes for a tree to survive with hands-on exploration of concepts such as habitats and ecosystems. They will learn about trees themselves - identify trees using their bark and leaves, discuss what resources trees need to survive, as well as the vital role they play in our ecosystems.

Star Lab

Within our completely dark, inflatable dome, we project various skies for students. The skies could possibly include the Northern hemisphere, the Southern hemisphere, the Earth, and the Moon. We teach students about the various stars they may and may not see and why, about stellar object and properties, and will share some constellation stories and astronomical history from various cultures.

Animal Study

Owl Study

In this class, students will use an exploratory approach to learn about owl adaptations and characteristics. They will have the opportunity to dissect owl pellets, then sort and classify the bones found inside to discover what owls eat here in Indiana. Students will leave the class with an understanding of what makes owls such incredible predators.

Predator/Prey

Students will discuss the role of food webs within an ecosystem. They will play a game, taking on the roles of predators and prey to understand their relationship with one another and the environment in which they live.

Outdoor Living Skills

Wilderness Survival

What would you do if you were stranded in the forest? Students will discuss the "Rule of 3" for human survival, learn what to pack, using the "10 Essentials" as well as how to build an effective survival shelter.

Compass Challenge

Students will learn how to navigate using a compass. After some practice, students will take their compass to our compass course and demonstrate their newly acquired skills.

Recreation

Archery

Students learn the basic techniques of using a bow and arrow and put it into practice in a safe environment supervised by trained staff.

Rock Climbing Tower

Camp Potawatami's 50 ft. climbing tower requires participants to step outside of their comfort zone. Expanding a student's comfort zone will not only improve self-esteem, but will also promote independence and can help to conquer fears or insecurities. But our climbing wall is also a teambuilding exercise because we emphasize support and encouragement from everyone. All participants will wear safety equipment and be given careful instructions from a trained facilitator.

Canoeing

A lesson in working together; canoeing combines fun and adventure. Blackman Lake is perfect for beginners, yet still holds challenges for those with experience. On land, students will learn the basics of stroking, steering, and safety, including properly fitting a lifejacket. In the water, students will put these techniques into action. **Because bad or windy weather can easily cancel this class, please choose an alternative class we can use if needed.** For students younger than 4th grade there will need to be additional chaperones with each group.

Group Building

Teambuilding 1

Trail groups are put into challenging situations that involve a series of ground level elements, props, and their own bodies to promote group understanding and teamwork skills. Students must focus on creative problem solving and group goal achievement as they overcome the challenges before them.

Teambuilding 2

Trail groups continue to be challenged by more dynamic situations that involve a series of ground level elements, props, and their own bodies to expand group understanding and teamwork skills. This class requires a prior teambuilding session. It focuses on creative problem solving and group goal achievements as the students overcome more difficult challenges before them.

Low Ropes / Brownie Walk

Camp Potawatami's low ropes course consist of various, off ground, elements to challenge groups to work together to accomplish a task.

Outdoor Education Evening Programs

The Potawatami Trail

Step back in time to experience a different way of life. Participants learn about pioneer living by participating in hands-on activities such as butter making, pioneer games, trading post station and candle making. **Requires 1.5-2 hours and at least 8 chaperones to run this program.**

Night Hike

During a walk through the night-time forest, without the aid of flashlights, participants learn to rely on senses other than sight. Students will discuss topics such as night-vision, sensory awareness, and nocturnal animal adaptations during this program.

Campfire

Songs and stories around the campfire bring the camp experience to life. The Camp Staff will lead students in skits and songs. Camp will provide ingredients for S'mores and teacher/s chaperones help with the cooking and assembly of the S'mores.

Camp Olympics

Groups are divided into teams. Teams create a name, mascot, and flag for their group, and then represent those colors in a series of team challenges! A fun and engaging way focus on teamwork and communication.

No Evening Program

You can replace this time with a self-lead activity or something else. If you elect for your own programming or free time, please remember that students can never be alone on camp and must be in groups of 3 or more at all times.

CAMP TERMS

Birthdays: We want to celebrate with your students on their birthdays, so please let us know of any birthdays that will occur during your trip by including that information on the Action Plan.

Flag Color Groups: Before arriving, teachers are to divide their students into groups. You will be notified before your trip about the number of groups the school will be split into. These groups will be together for all activities while at Camp. We recommend that teachers not assign parent chaperones to their children's groups.

Camp Store: The Camp store is available for your students to purchase souvenirs. Prices range from \$1.00 to \$45.00.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Flags: Each day we do a flag raising ceremony 15 minutes before breakfast. At this ceremony we raise the American Flag and the YMCA core value flags (Honesty, Respect, Caring, and Responsibility). In the evening the flags are lowered. The core values are discussed during each flag ceremony.

Grace: We offer the opportunity for students to participate in singing graces before each meal. If grace is not desirable, we can offer a moment of silence before meals.

Teacher/Chaperone Responsibilities

- Lead by example.
- Take head counts. Make sure you know how many students you have in your group and that they are all present at the beginning of the activity.
- Maintain the Rule of 3. When a student needs to go somewhere away from the group they need to take an adult and a third person whether that be another adult or a student. No student should ever be in a 1 on 1 situation with another student nor an adult.
- You are responsible for the behavior of your group of students. A Camp staff member will teach classes, but we will need you to supervise and manage the students. Remember, we only have about an hour per class so we want to make it a valuable hour and stay on focus.
- We ask that as a chaperone, you be with the students. This includes all recreational periods as well as the downtime between classes. No student should ever be alone (out of eyesight, hearing distance, or in an unknown location) at Camp.
- After evening activities, it is advised that everyone heads back to their lodge and start getting ready for bedtime. Quiet hours are from 10pm to 7am per local ordinance.
- At mealtimes you will be sitting at tables with students and asked to help with the clean-up process as well as ensuring that other mealtime procedures run smoothly and encouraging limited meal waste.
- At mealtimes coffee and tea are available to you in Arrowhead Lodge. Feel free to help yourself and use the coffee mugs. Please remember, these things have been provided for you, not the students.
- Smoking is prohibited everywhere on Camp, and we ask that if anyone needs to smoke that they leave camp property. Alcohol is prohibited onsite.
- Some of you will be asked to help in classes or participate “behind the scenes” in some of our programs. Thank you in advance for your help with these events.
- We ask students to be prepared for their classes by the time they begin. This means close-toed shoes for the climbing wall. In order to do this, your students will need to know what their next class will be. Students do not have time to return to their lodges in between classes, so please help them to be prepared for the whole day.
- Last, but certainly not least, HAVE FUN!!!!

Thank you,

The Outdoor Education Staff at YMCA Camp Potawotami