

Pedagogy Option 5: Field Trip Lesson Plan -15 points--

Norwalk Aquarium

Grade level: HS

Topic of focus: Conservation and Ocean Education

Standards Addressed: The Essential Principles of Ocean Sciences:

Earth has one big ocean with many features.

The ocean and life in the ocean shape the features of Earth.

The ocean is a major influence on weather and climate.

The ocean is largely unexplored.

The ocean and humans are inextricably interconnected.

The ocean makes Earth habitable.

The ocean supports a great diversity of life and ecosystems.

Time needed 4-6 hours

Objectives Students will explore the Principles of Ocean Science through visiting exhibits and learning about the challenges different species face in today's world and the ever-changing quality of their environment and habitats.

Student Worksheets NA

Grading Rubrics NA

Description:

The Norwalk Maritime Aquarium has a marine boat ride trip available on their educational vessel where they have an eco-friendly vessel that takes a voyage from Norwalk out into the Long Island Sound to see seasonal wildlife (depending on the season, the focus shifts). They have a plankton net and they capture invertebrates and display the live action on a video microscope so everyone can see the copepods and other plankton right there in the sound around the boat. Seals, birds, and other wildlife might be discussed as opportunities arise (kind of like whale watching, sometimes you see them, sometimes you don't!)

Following a sail on the water, students then visit the aquarium, which is such a rich opportunity for students to see exhibits with different organisms in close-up settings that allow students the chance to view them move, eat, interact with their setting which has been created to allow humans a view into their story. In each exhibit there is educational information provided for the challenges the species face due to environmental and habitat change.

Main exhibits that can be visited include Sea Turtles, Journey with Jellies, Ocean beyond the sound (Shark Tank!!), River otters (my favorite), Pinniped Cove (which is so different than the last time I visited!) where their rescued harbor seals reside, and of course the Shark and Ray Touch Pool (again so different than my last visit).

Lastly there are opportunities to have encounters with Ambassador Animals! There are many non-aquatic animals that complement the aquatic species. This is a chance to see other animals and their connections to conservation efforts and the mission of aquariums and zoos in helping to maintain biodiversity and protect species richness and diversity everywhere.

Lesson plan ideas:

I really like the inquiry-based approach of experiences. I do not like prescribed lessons around a visit to a site. Usually our field trips involve some action or service if possible. This kind of trip might not have a service component.

I would ask the students to do a pre-trip brainstorm about things they are curious about, maybe even let them explore the website for the facility. On the trip I would require them to take some photos. I use photostory assignments instead of research projects these days. They can take as many pictures as they like, maybe work in groups, maybe alone. Instead of taking notes, I think pictures are quicker and still as valuable, maybe more, than some notes they wrote down while a staff member is telling them information.

Following the trip, students would be expected to create a Photo Story of their experience, with a slide show that included facts, information and their personal reflections for a specified amount of exhibits they visited. They would be encouraged to use some videos they might have taken, recorded their experiences while on the trip, or written following the experience. Technology is an advantage for this kind of thing and I hope to teach them how to use it to make their lives easier and more memorable. Some photos I might look for students to take are below (my examples I might show them before going on the trip to give them an idea of what level of detail would be good.)





There is a 4D theater with different informative shows for all ages!! If time allows, this is a great way to get to experience an immersive ocean experience!

“Proof” that you visited, i.e., a dated receipt, ticket stub, photograph, etc.
I did not get an individual ticket because it was a teacher group trip, but here is a picture of us at the end of the 5 hour field trip with the ambassador animals ☐

