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If you need help with fieldwork the NSW Department of Education and Training has twenty-three Environmental Education Centres (EEC) throughout NSW giving most schools in every region access to a trained fieldwork teacher to assist them with organising and conducting a fieldwork experience at the centre or in their local area. Fieldwork activities at the centres are designed to complement the mandatory fieldwork in junior and senior Geography syllabuses.

A list of the centres can be found on the DET website, <http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/learning/yrk12focusareas/environed/edcontact.php>

Whilst these centres are owned and staffed by DET (except Penrith Lakes – jointly owned with CEC), priority is naturally given to DET schools. However, every attempt is made to assist teachers from all sectors through their websites and with individual assistance. Most centres have a website, some have virtual fieldwork online and downloads of excursion outlines. The centres in each region can advise teachers where the best locations are, to conduct particular fieldwork and accompany the group if required. Some centres have both day and overnight options while all centres can organise one-day fieldwork experiences.

Staff at the centres, in collaboration with teachers, can design specific fieldwork activities that relate to their students' class work. Staff at the centres can also visit schools and local fieldwork sites to help teachers use their school grounds or local area for fieldwork, rather than travelling long distances.

Any fieldwork that can be done at school should be done at school.

Fieldwork rationale

Fieldwork cannot be underestimated for its importance, impact and the teaching value as a learning experience. For some students it may be the only time they get to see, feel, hear and smell the environment. For this reason alone it has an impact on the student far beyond the time spent doing the fieldwork.

Fieldwork is far more valuable if the students are properly prepared with pre and post fieldwork activities.

Fieldwork can be used to interpret, understand, monitor and manage the diversity in the environment.

Fieldwork can be carried out anywhere from the school playground to pristine natural areas to garbage tips.

Fieldwork sometimes is the only way to discover what is out there.

Fieldwork should be interesting and fun, as well as educational for you and your students.

Fieldwork policies

The Department of Education and Training has specific policies relating to excursions and bushwalking. Make yourself familiar with these and your school's excursion policies before organising a field study.

A teacher/adult to student ratio of one to fifteen is required for bushwalking and the teacher must have visited the area at least once.

Before the day:

- Contact an **Environmental Education Centre** if you need assistance.
- Follow your school's excursion policy. Get a number of quotes for the bus cost.
- Visit the study area **at least once prior** to the field day. Conduct a risk assessment and submit.
- Estimate the time needed to undertake the fieldwork. If there is walking involved allow time for this as well as food breaks and travelling time. Choose the closest location to the school to cut down travelling time and maximise time in the field.
- Plan the day and fieldwork activities. Organise field equipment and design worksheets include bus trip as part of the fieldwork. **Don't attempt too much or too little!**
- Assign students to groups or individual tasks. Teach students at school how to use equipment and fieldwork techniques needed for the field study.

Fieldwork at Environmental Education Centres

- Tell students what is expected of them on the day and the reports to be handed in after the field trip.
- Send home permission note. Check all the students' medical condition and medication requirements.
- Have an emergency procedure to follow in case of an accident.
- **What if it rains?**

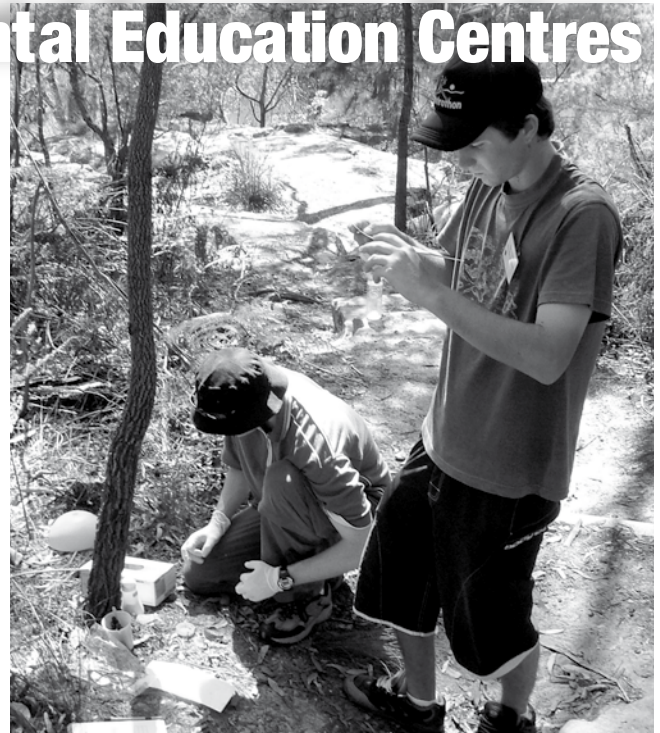
On the day:

- Check that all the students who need it have their medication. Otherwise they don't go!
- Make sure you have all the fieldwork equipment and worksheets.
- Take a first aid kit and mobile phone.
- Check to see if the bus driver and you are going to the same place.
- **Take nothing but photos leave nothing but footprints. Have an enjoyable day.**



Pre fieldwork activities

- Students should be fully aware of what the purpose of the fieldwork is.
- Make them familiar with the study area through maps, aerial photographs, computer mapping system, slides, video, previous student work.
- Locate the study area on a map of the area and where it is located in relation to the school.
- Draw the route to be followed from the school to the study area/s.
- From maps construct cross sections across the study area.
- Ask the students questions about the landform, vegetation, drainage, human impact of the area from the maps, photographs, etc.
- List all the fieldwork equipment you will need, such as questionnaires, maps, cameras, computers, test kits.
- Practise the fieldwork techniques (using equipment, recording skills) in the classroom and playground. If they are not familiar with the techniques it wastes valuable time on the field study day.



- Let students know the expectations of the fieldwork and what is expected of them on the day.
- Students should be aware of the type of report they are required to hand in after the fieldwork. This is important so they can bring cameras etc.

Field study day

- The bus trip can be used as part of the field day. Have a map from the school to where you are going. Have the students trace the route to be taken on the map as a classroom activity before the day.
- Have some question for the bus trip based on the features along the way. Shopping centres, transport links at different points, list suburbs, direction travelling at certain points, landscape features etc. Make the questions like a rally asking what they see at different points along the way. You can use grid references or numbers on the map. Make the bus trip part of the assessment.
- When arriving at the study site define the area where the students are allowed to go.
- Make sure all the students understand the tasks they need to complete.
- Have the students form their predetermined groups.
- Hand out equipment such as clinometers, thermometer, hygrometers, wind and light meters, soil and water test kits.
- Hand out worksheets.
- Move amongst the groups helping with any problems.

Post fieldwork activities

- A written report on the fieldwork including graphs, drawings and diagrams if appropriate.
- A written report with photographs. Include a critical evaluation on the fieldwork techniques used and the results gained, including a review of the expectations prior to the fieldwork.



Acknowledgements

Foott, B. (2009). Fieldwork at environmental education centres. *Geography Bulletin* 41.1. 20–21.
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