

Frequently Asked Questions - Environmental Science Program

What kind of program is this?

- The "Envi Sci" program is a month-long outdoor educational experience that allows students to enjoy the wilderness and learn about the science of the environment. It is a daytime program, except for two overnights, on the trip to Mt. Washington (July 31st, and August 1st).

Who can participate in the program?

- The program takes about 30 to 35 students who will be going into grades 7 through 10 in the fall -- older middle school and younger high school students.

What is the mix of students?

- Usually the group of students is about half younger students (entering grade 7 or 8) and half older students (entering grade 9 or 10). It varies from year to year, but the group is usually about 50/50 boys and girls.

When and where does it take place?

- The program runs during the month of July and early August, and is based at Bowen Elementary School in Newton Centre. This year, the first day is Thursday July 5th, and the last day is Thursday August 2nd (no activities on July 4th). It is an outdoor program, so the students go outside to do different activities each day, rain or shine. We ask all students to have raingear and hiking boots every day (see detailed list below).

What is a typical day like?

- Most days start at 9:00 am and end at 4:00 pm. The students meet at Bowen school, then split into smaller groups of about 8 to 10 students with two leaders for each group. One group might go on a hike, another group might take a bicycle trip, and another group might ride the T to the Boston Harbor Islands. Students return to Bowen for pickup at 4:00 pm unless other arrangements are made. Some days have different start and end times, or locations, but we give families advance notice of any days that will be different. Calendars from previous years are available to show the variety of daily activities:

<http://www.newtonenvisci.org/calendar/index.html>

How much does the program cost?

- The tuition is \$1,395. which covers the canoe rentals, all buses, and bunk accommodations on Mt. Washington. There are two discounts available for early registration: \$100 off if all tuition is paid by January 31st [total cost of \$1,295] or \$50 off if a deposit of \$250 is paid by January 31st AND the balance is paid by March 31st [total cost of \$1,345].

How do I register?

- register online by going to the "Apply" page of the Envi Sci website:

<http://www.newtonenvisci.org/application/index.html>

and clicking on the link to the "online payment page."

OR

- download the registration form from the Envi Sci website and fill it in:

<http://www.newtonenvisci.org/application/ESPapplication2013.pdf>

Send it with a deposit check of \$250. to:

David Backer, Executive Director
P.O. Box 600292
Newton, MA 02460

Is there any financial assistance available?

- Yes, the program does have some scholarship funds available. Interested families should contact the Executive Director, David Backer, by email at contact@newtonenvisci.org or by phone at 617-447-9317 to get the scholarship request form. Scholarships are determined by need and funds available.

What equipment and clothing should students have for the first day of the program?

The program recommends the following:

Hiking Boots (over the ankle) - Walking and hiking are essential elements of the program. With the exception of the canoe prep and canoe days, nearly every single day of the program will feature long walks. These walks build into some extensive hikes in the last full week of the program and, ultimately, into our ascent of Mt. Washington. It is important to break in your boots before the program starts. If you have boots already, please try them on again before starting ESP and do some walking around to ensure everything is good. If you plan to buy new boots, please get the advice of a salesperson, and try on multiple pairs.

Backpack - Any regular daypack or school bag will do. The only requirements are that it has enough room for your lunch, rain gear (tops and bottoms), a small first aid kit, and maybe a Frisbee. A CamelBack or similar pack that accepts a water-bladder will increase the comfort of the student, but they are not required, and most students historically have not used them. Some students will use frame packs owned by ESP for the Mt. Washington trip; you may also choose to purchase or rent your own.

First Aid Kit - During our trips students can maybe exposed to small scrapes, blisters, and the like. Some bandaids, moleskin, and a small tube of neosporin or bacitracin should be fine. Include some sunscreen and insect repellent.

Water - Two Liters of water, in either water bottles or water bladders, are required on ALL trips, with some trips expressly requiring extra. Bottled water is not a good option - it is not sustainable. Tap water in an unbreakable container will do.

Rain Gear - A rain jacket (no ponchos) is required on all trips. Umbrellas are not appropriate for hiking and field work; they are not allowed even on our urban trips. We recommend that rain pants be brought every day, and they are mandatory for the mountain sequence. PVC rain gear is not recommended on Mt. Washington; it is not rugged enough for the conditions there and can shred in the winds.

Lunch - Something delicious and nutritious, that does not require refrigeration.

Sun protection - a hat and sunscreen are recommended

You can download the Mountain Equipment List from the Calendar page:
<http://www.newtonenvisci.org/calendar/index.html>

Who are the leaders?

- Most of the leaders have been through the program as students. They are older high school, or college-age students who enjoy the outdoors and science. Many have been in the program for several years.

How does a student become a leader?

- At the end of each year, students are asked to fill in an evaluation sheet, which includes an invitation to eligible-age students to state why they would like to become a leader. The staff selects students to become first-year leaders.

Are there adult supervisors?

Yes, the Executive Director goes on all of the bus trips. There will usually be at least one other leader who is over 21 on staff.

Is there any transportation to the program?

- No, the program does not provide transportation to and from the program. The program does provide bus transportation for the all-group field trips, and bus companies must comply with the City of Newton's transportation requirements.

However, we do ask families if they are interested in carpooling and we will pass along contact information for any family that gives permission for us to do so. Families can then make their own arrangements.

How do students go on their daily trips?

- The students and leaders in the program get to their trip destinations through one of four ways. The first and most common is -- they hike. The leaders take groups of about 8 to 10 students and they walk to and from on sidewalks, or trails whether it is Cold Spring Park, or the Arnold Arboretum.

The second way is they ride bicycles on the bike trips, such as the "Geology Bike Loop" or to Walden Pond. Helmets are required.

The third way is they take the T (Green line) for trips such as the Boston Harbor Islands, or the Aquarium.

The fourth way is by a bus. There are several all-program bus trips such as the trip to Merchants Island to study the marshlands, Blue Hills, Mt. Monadnock, and the 3-day back-packing trip to Mt. Washington. The Program only uses bus companies that are approved by the City's transportation coordinator, and the bus companies must have insurance and bonding.

How can I reach the program if I need to during the day?

All families will have phone numbers and email addresses of the Director and Student Director, who should be contacted if a family expects that a student will not attend the program, or has to make other special arrangements. You can also call the Program's phone at 617-447-9317.

What safety and health provisions are made by the program?

The Envi Sci program is required to meet with a nurse from the City of Newton Health Department each year, to review its records in order to receive its license. The program must comply with the requirements for any youth camp program.

All leaders in the program must have active first aid certification. Leaders carry first-aid supplies on the daily activities.

How can I get answers to other questions?

Contact us by phone at 617-447-9317, or send us email at contact@newtonenvisci.org or write to us at P.O. Box 600292, Newton, MA 02460 and we will get back to you as soon as possible.