

# RANCHO EL CHORRO OUTDOOR SCHOOL

## PARENT GUIDE



### CHECKLIST FOR PACKING

- Sack Lunch for the first day
- Sleeping bag or sheets/blanket
- Pillow
- Pajamas
- Underwear
- Long or crew-length socks
- Bathing suit (for showering)
- Jeans or long pants
- Shirts (long & short sleeve)
- Hat (for sun and warmth)
- Jacket & raincoat/poncho
- Sweatshirt or sweater
- Shoes (hiking boots, tennis shoes, sandals for shower)
- Toothbrush/Toothpaste
- Comb or brush
- Shampoo/soap
- Towel/washcloth
- Sunscreen
- Kleenex
- Chapstick
- Water bottle
- Camera
- Stationery/paper/postage stamps
- Reading book
- Money (Students may purchase items at the REC Student Store.)
- Day Pack

**PLEASE DO NOT BRING:** Valuable items, food, candy, electronic games, I-pods, fishing gear, jewelry, high-heeled shoes, or knives. Please mark all items with the student's name.

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

### **RANCHO EL CHORRO OUTDOOR SCHOOL**

2450 Pennington Creek Road  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93405  
(805)782-7336 office, (805) 544-7559 fax  
[www.ranchoelchorro.org](http://www.ranchoelchorro.org)

## MESSAGE FROM THE COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Dear Parent or Guardian:

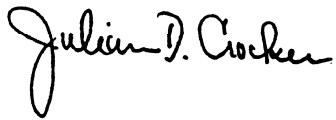
Rancho El Chorro Outdoor School has been operated by the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education for nearly 40 years. Each year, more than 10,000 elementary school students participate in programs ranging from one to five days.

The hands-on nature walks offered are designed to allow discovery and investigation of the natural world and to teach students about local ecosystems. The Naturalists teach lessons that have been written to correlate with state content standards.

The Rancho El Chorro staff promotes an interest in and a respect for the environment. From a study of Chumash culture to marine science to geology to freshwater ecology, the carefully designed interactive lessons are challenging, informative, integrated into classroom activities, and lots of fun.

The County Board of Education has supported the program over the years, making it available to students from in and out of San Luis Obispo County. As students learn concepts about taking care of our environment, they will become better stewards of the land wherever they live.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to serve you.



Julian D. Crocker  
County Superintendent of Schools

## CAUSES FOR IMMEDIATE EXPULSION

**Parents will be asked to remove their children from the outdoor school, day or night, for the following reasons:**

1. Intentionally harming another person.
2. Bringing or using knives, firearms, explosives, controlled substances, or other dangerous objects.
3. Cabin raiding.
4. Disrespect, refusal to follow the rules.

Children are not allowed to call home except in emergencies. Parents should call the outdoor school only in case of an emergency. Social calls are not permitted.

- Emergency phone number: **(805) 782-7336**
- Additional numbers: (805) 782-7337, (805) 782-7338, (805) 782-7349.

**Please provide your child with a sack lunch on the first day.** We recommend including a canned beverage. Students and parents will be notified by the classroom teachers as to the departure time from school and the arrival time at school. Please contact the staff at the Rancho El Chorro Outdoor School if you have any questions. Your support of the program is critical to a successful experience for your child. We sincerely appreciate your efforts.

## LIABILITY

The outdoor school does not accept responsibility for children's personal property. Please check your child's suitcase or duffel bag and send only the items necessary at the outdoor school. Please clearly mark all personal belongings.

## FINAL TIPS FOR PARENTS

Write and mail your letter a week in advance so that your child may receive it after reaching the outdoor school. S/he may be lonely and will expect a letter. Please put the dates of attendance and the school name on the envelope. Please note that letters received after children have attended camp will be returned to sender. You may also FAX letters to: (805) 544-7559.

Rancho El Chorro Outdoor School  
2450 Pennington Creek Road  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93405  
Child's Name, Child's Home School Name, Dates of Participation

## REGARDING MEDICATION

When your child comes to the outdoor school, it is important to remember the following instructions regarding medications that you may be sending to the outdoor school with your child:

**NON PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS:** These include all over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, Tylenol, cough drops, etc. If you should decide to send these medications, they must be listed on the reverse side of the Registration Form and signed off by a physician before they can be administered. They must be in the original store container with your child's name clearly marked on the container.

**PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS:** This includes all medicines that are prescribed by a doctor. The reverse side of the Registration Form (Request for Medication and Physician's Instructions) must be filled out and signed by a physician. The prescription medicine must be in the prescription bottle with your child's name on it and with clear instruction for administration.

Please check the expiration dates on all medications. Medication that has expired cannot be administered. **ALL medications should be given to the teachers and not packed with your child's luggage.** Medications are kept locked until they are administered with the exception of inhalers. Once inhalers are recorded, they remain with your child for the duration of the outdoor school session.

Many students experience allergy symptoms at the outdoor school due to spending a greater amount of time outdoors. Please consult with your physician whether or not to send over the counter allergy medication. Please list all medications on the back page of the registration form and obtain physicians signature.

## RANCHO EL CHORRO OUTDOOR SCHOOL

Your child's upcoming experiences at Rancho El Chorro Outdoor School will make a very important contribution to his/her education. The Outdoor School program enables students to reach out and touch the natural world and explore their place within it. The program is academically oriented and serves as an extension of science curriculum in the classroom. Students develop a greater awareness of and an appreciation for the environment. With this awareness comes realistic and responsible conservation practices.

Responsibility, respect, and cooperation are stressed at the outdoor school. Group living encourages the development of these traits. Each student will be responsible for cabin neatness, caring for personal belongings, personal hygiene, and getting along with his/her cabin and trail group.

## A WEEK AT RANCHO EL CHORRO OUTDOOR SCHOOL

The San Luis Obispo County Office of Education operates the residential outdoor school program located off of Highway One, between San Luis Obispo and Morro Bay. Students participate in a week-long program. (Three and Four day programs are also available.) While at the outdoor school students will receive room and board, which includes three meals/day plus snacks (a sack lunch should be sent the first day.) The outdoor school maintains a restroom and shower facility, a dining hall, an auditorium, and many small classrooms and labs. Students are placed in cabins in groups of six or seven with one cabin leader. Each cabin has eight beds and has a heater.

Students will experience many kinds of outdoor areas: a creek, a freshwater pond, an oak forest, grasslands, chaparral, tidepools, beaches, and the camp setting. The Marine Science component of the program is conducted at various sites including the Morro Bay Estuary and Cayucos tidepools. The regular classroom teacher accompanies the students to camp and on the trails. During trail instruction, students are placed in hiking groups of approximately 15-18 students. These hiking groups are led by the outdoor school Naturalists who have academic backgrounds in the biological and physical sciences and in the environment.

During non-instructional periods, the students are under the supervision of cabin leaders and the classroom teachers. Students are supervised 24 hours a day.

## **PARTICIPATION**

The residential outdoor school accepts fifth and sixth grade students from San Luis Obispo County as well as other counties. **IT IS THE PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO COMPLETE AND SIGN THE STUDENT REGISTRATION FORM AND RETURN IT TO THE CLASSROOM TEACHER. THIS FORM IS ATTACHED TO THIS GUIDE.** It is the home school's responsibility to accept financial responsibility for expenses. This usually involves some fund-raising. We encourage every school and every district, both public and private, to participate in the outdoor school program.

**Attention:** In an effort to maintain a closed campus and lessen disruption of the program, visitors who are not registered participants are not allowed on campus. We also ask parents to plan on their children staying for their entire session. That may mean that students will have to choose between outdoor school and sports or other activities. Outdoor school is a once in a lifetime experience and children are very disappointed when they have to miss any part of it. In this manner, parents can assist in the development of their child's independence and maintaining a closed campus.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Transportation to the Rancho El Chorro Outdoor School is the responsibility of the home school. Transportation to the Marine Science Program at the Morro Bay Estuary, Cayucos Tidepools, or other sites is the responsibility of the outdoor school.

## **WHAT WILL THE STUDENTS LEARN?**

Rancho El Chorro Outdoor School's curriculum is correlated to the content standards in science, language arts, mathematics, and history/social science. The program increases the student's understanding of the natural world and promotes a positive attitude about the environment. All lessons are based on easy to understand ecological concepts that allow students to develop an appreciation and concern for the natural and human aspects of the Earth. Each student is given a journal to use as a workbook during the lessons and to record their own personal discoveries on the trail. These are examples of Here are some of the science concepts covered in the lessons: Plant communities, Interdependence, Adaptations, Water Cycle/Watershed, Geologic Change, Astronomy, and Ocean Communities.

## **WHAT IS THE OUTDOOR SCHOOL LIKE?**

Days are quite full at the outdoor school beginning with wake-up time at 6:30 a.m. until lights out at 9:30 p.m. Days are spent on the trail, in recreation, resting, and at meals. Meals at the outdoor school are tasty and varied. The daily menu offers a balanced diet under the direction of the Rancho El Chorro Director and the Food Services Director from the San Luis Coastal Unified School District.

## **WHO IS THE STAFF?**

The outdoor school program is one of the many programs offered by the Educational Support Services Division under Brad Schultz, Assistant Superintendent. Celeste Royer is the Director at the Outdoor School. She is responsible for supervising the Rancho El Chorro Outdoor School program. Amie Linscott provides all secretarial support for the Mike Walker provides the maintenance and custodial support for the entire campus.

The outdoor school employs Naturalists who lead the trail groups. All of the Naturalists hold degrees in the sciences or related fields and several possess teaching credentials. The Naturalists play a key role in the outdoor school experience. Full-time, resident Outdoor Education Interns and Work Training Program workers also assist in the delivery of the program.

The classroom teacher represents the school district and is responsible for the health and safety of your child. The teacher accompanies students on hikes and supervises them at all times. The classroom teacher also plays a key role in the program and is your primary contact person.

Cabin leaders are parents, other school employees, or carefully selected high school students that exhibit leadership, maturity, and good academic preparation. The selection of cabin leaders is the responsibility of the participating school districts.

## **WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?**

Your approval and enthusiasm for the outdoor school program will help your child look forward to this time away from home. Please read the following suggestions:

- Talk to your child and tell them what to expect at the outdoor school
- Promote independence.
- Write to your child (at least a week ahead) or FAX to (805) 544-7559. Phone calls home for homesickness are prohibited.
- Pack together to make sure appropriate items are sent and inappropriate items remain at home (See checklist on back page).
- Send stamps and provide stationary for your child.