Education Program
Policies & Procedures

January 2022
To be updated annually as needed
# Appendix

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Program Description

Student Estuary Exploration Youth Program

Student Estuary Exploration (SEE) programs refer to all educational programs designed for youth (school-aged children pre-K to high school). No college-level programs have been scheduled to date. However, this document will be updated to include this group and/or any pertinent changes as needed. SEE currently runs spring - fall each year at the James Farm Ecological Preserve as well as off-site (e.g., school grounds) and virtually if/as needed in an effort to accommodate group transportation limitations and the impacts of COVID-19.

Public Programs

Public programs include all education programs offered to the public (e.g., residents, tourists, etc.) at the James Farm Ecological Preserve. These serve intergenerational audiences and currently run spring-fall on a weekly basis with occasional programs during the winter (weather and staff capacity-permitting).

*All programs are offered free of charge, but donations are accepted through [THIS link](#).

Program Advertisement

Youth Program

The Head Environmental Educator (HEE) will be responsible for producing external communication materials for youth programs. The HEE will coordinate advertisements and social media posts with the Communications Specialist (CS). They will also work with the CS to update and improve the Center’s youth program webpage to help make information readily available to teachers and group leaders. The [SEE Youth Program Packet](#) and a program catalog will also be made available on the Center’s website and updated annually as needed. These documents will also be sent to group leads when they request program information.

Prior to the start of the education programming season (i.e. early/mid-February for spring semester; early/mid-August for fall semester), the HEE will distribute
emails to the Center’s youth program contacts, which will include schools (e.g., IRSD, CHSD, Sussex Academy, homeschools, etc.), scouts, youth groups (e.g., Upward Bound, daycare centers, etc.) and any other relevant contacts (i.e. Sussex County Health Coalition). This email is intended to advertise the Center’s youth programs and share any necessary program updates.

Public Programs

The Environmental Educator (EE) will work with the CS to promote programs on social media, website and e-blasts. Additionally, the EE is responsible for creating public program flyers and distributing them to multiple areas. This may include, but not limited to: media sources and local online platforms (e.g., libraries and community centers, Southern Delaware Tourism, local Chambers, PEEP partners, Sussex County Health Coalition affiliates, etc.). Flyers will also be regularly updated and posted at the Preserve’s kiosk and will be sent to James Farm docents. The frequency of flyer updates will vary between seasons.

Booking Programs

Youth Program

The HEE serves as the point contact for SEE youth program scheduling. The lead teacher/educator of the group and the HEE will coordinate the schedule and activities. Once a program date has been confirmed, the group will be added to the Field Trip Schedule. This document will be updated at the start of each calendar year. It is the responsibility of the HEE to maintain and update this document. If a group requires a more detailed schedule, the HEE will create and distribute it among the appropriate school teachers and Center educators. The distribution of program forms (waivers and surveys) is also the HEE’s responsibility during the booking process.

Ideally, groups will book programs as far in advance as possible. Preference for program days will be given on a first come, first serve basis. It is best practice for all groups to have a rain date scheduled in case of inclement weather. It is the responsibility of the HEE to ensure that there are sufficient staff available when booking programs (see Instructor & Chaperone Supervision section for details).
Public Programs

The EE, with assistance from the HEE as needed, will be responsible for scheduling the Center’s public programs. The EE will be the primary contact for individuals inquiring about these opportunities.

Public programs are primarily held weekly during the peak season (April/May - September/October). Program schedules are to be offered during varying days of the week and times to accommodate a wide variety of participant availability. Educators will continue to offer public programs throughout the “off” season (i.e., November - March), but on a reduced frequency (i.e., one - three per month) depending on staff capacity and weather. A variety of program topics will be offered and vary between seasons. Offering Kid's Day-specific programs for families when local children have off from school is recommended.

Public programs must be added to the Center’s website and Eventbrite page. It is best practice to have these events scheduled at least one month in advance. It is the responsibility of the EE to work with the CS and ensure the Center’s website and Eventbrite pages are up to date at all times.

Private Adult Group Programs

The booking process for private adult group programs (e.g., CHEER, AARP, businesses, etc. requesting a tour/program at the Preserve) is the responsibility of the HEE. The specific steps will vary between groups, but will follow a similar process outlined in the Youth Programs section above.

Group Sizes

SEE Youth Program

Currently, there is no minimum group size requirement. This will be revisited after further evaluation in 2022 pending impacts from COVID-19. The maximum total group size is 60 students, but this number is subject to change following further evaluation in 2022. Each educator should have a maximum learning group size of 25-30 students. There must be at least 1 adult present for every 15 children in a group (see Instructor & Chaperone Supervision section for more details).
It is the responsibility of the HEE to make sure there is a sufficient ratio between adults and children for all youth programs. The HEE will recruit and supervise seasonal instructors (e.g., interns, volunteers) if extra adult educators are required. The Outreach & Education Coordinator may also assist if needed.

Public Programs
Currently, there is no minimum group size requirement. This will be revisited after further evaluation in 2022. There is no set maximum group size for public programs. Parents/guardians must remain with their children (i.e., participants under the age of 18) during all programs, so adult to child ratios do not need to be factored. The decision of when to ask a second Center staff member or volunteer to assist will be made on a case-by-case basis and will be further reviewed throughout 2022.

Cancellations
Youth Program
Cancellation is per the discretion of the HEE and group teacher. Youth programs may be cancelled and/or rescheduled by the Center for various reasons (e.g., inclement weather, staff limitations causing insufficient instructor and adult to child ratios, COVID concerns, etc.). In the event of a cancellation, it is the responsibility of the HEE to communicate the change of schedule with the teacher/group lead as well as any other relevant/supporting members (e.g., other Center staff, seasonal educators, etc.). Cancellations should be made between 24-48 hours in advance (latter is preferred if possible).

Public Programs
Cancellation is per the discretion of the EE and must be decided at least 24 hours in advance. Programs may be cancelled for inclement weather, extremely low enrollment (decided on a case-by-case basis at this time), or other unforeseen reasons.

The EE is responsible for communicating schedule changes to all relevant individuals including Center staff, volunteers, and registrants.

In the event of an illness or emergency on the day of a scheduled program, and the HEE or EE is unable to deliver the program, it is their responsibility to notify
their immediate supervisor as soon as possible. It is also their responsibility to inform participants of any changes if possible. However, if they are unable to do so, it is the responsibility of the next immediate supervisor to notify them on their behalf. Contact information for youth program leaders will be kept up to date on the Field Trip Schedule while the contact information for public program participants can be found on Eventbrite.

Teacher & Group Communications

Youth Programs

The HEE is responsible for establishing a clear line of communication with group leaders, which will include emails and/or phone calls. Immediately after booking a program, the HEE will send a confirmation email to the group leader. This email will confirm program dates and group size and will also include the Education Program Waiver for Minors and the Pre-Program Survey. The HEE will also send out a 2-week reminder email to the group leader. This will be an opportunity to make any final adjustments to the program and will also include the waivers and surveys if those were not already completed.

The HEE and lead teacher will also work together to confirm the program schedule. This will include a breakdown of the Center’s introduction activities. At the start of every trip to the Preserve, educators will briefly review safety and other logistics details with the group while students are on the bus (if this is not possible because people are traveling in individual vehicles, the group will meet at the kiosk). Once students exit the buses, educators will lead students through a brief 5-senses activity to help ground the group and acclimate them to the Preserve. Following these activities, students will begin the main portion of their field trip (starting with an introduction to the Center, Preserve, and activities for the day).

Public Programs

The EE is responsible for sending a reminder email to participants at least 24 hours prior to a scheduled public program. This email should include information on what to expect during the program, what to wear/bring, how to get in contact with Center staff, and any other pertinent information.
Participation Forms

Youth Program

A parent/guardian of each program participant under the age of 18 is required to read and sign the Center’s Education Program Waiver for Minors before attending each program. The HEE is responsible for distributing and collecting all signed forms through the teacher/group lead. Hard copies of the completed forms will be labeled and stored in the HEE’s office. Electronic copies must be saved for life and will be filed on the Drive HERE.

With regards to photos of minors, parent/guardian consent must be granted on the waiver above before Center representatives capture and use any images for public-facing materials. If any parent/guardian selects “no” on the form, the lead instructor will take the necessary precautions to ensure that the respective minors are not included in any photos. The particular method is dependent on the number of participants and feasibility for the instructor to track (e.g., group together those that are/are not permitted, identify using colored sticker schemes, etc.). Only photos with confirmed photo releases are to be uploaded to the Drive to prevent any errors. If ever in doubt on the day of the program, photos showing minors’ faces will not be taken—photos of hands engaging in an activity or backs of heads may be an alternative. If there is ever a photo in question, the HEE will contact the teacher/group lead to verify photo permissions prior to uploading to the Drive. Unless otherwise specifically communicated with the parent/guardian in advance and documented, no names of minors will ever be publicly shared. Only group names (e.g., Sussex Academy 4th grade class) will be shared.

Public Programs

Registration is conducted primarily online through Eventbrite. Participants must agree to the liability and photo/video terms as part of the registration process.

Printed copies of the program waiver must be available on site in the event of walk-up registrants. Signed waivers must be filed in the HEE’s office for a minimum of a year. During check-in, the EE (or program lead) is responsible for reviewing the registration list and ensuring waivers have been signed. Should any participant wish to not be photographed, the instructor will not capture
footage of them. Only photos with photo consent are to be uploaded to the Drive to prevent any errors.

A similar procedure for private group programs and the future planned lecture series (anticipated for FY22-FY23) will be followed.

Outreach Events

Waivers are not necessary for large-scale public outreach events (e.g., Native Plant Sale/Water Family Fest).

Pre & Post-Program Actions

Program Alerts

In an effort to prevent conflicts between program participants and Preserve visitors (e.g., sharing space on the beach), advanced public alerts are needed.

- **Electronic**: Scheduled programs will be added to the Center's website in advance. Additionally, social media posts (i.e., once per season on the main Facebook & Instagram pages and monthly alerts on the Preserve's Facebook page during peak season) notifying visitors that regular programs are in session is required. Details to communicate (e.g., check the Center's website for program calendar, be respectful, maintain space, dog leash law, etc.) will be developed in collaboration between the O&EC, HEE, and CS.

- **On-site Signage**: On the day-of youth and public programs, the lead instructor will post signs (e.g., free-standing sidewalk sign at the kiosk and beach entrance) alerting visitors that a program will be in session.

- **Docents**: The EE will distribute a monthly email to docents and copy the Project Manager (PM) which will include a schedule of events—both public and youth programs—for the month at the Preserve. If specific assistance from volunteers is needed for public programs, the EE will directly contact docents to coordinate their involvement. The PM will also invite the EE and HEE to the docent training event where appropriate.

- **Center Staff**: All scheduled programs will be added to the “JF Youth & Public Education” tab of the staff Google Calendar. Educators will do their best to avoid booking programs on Wednesday mornings to prevent any conflicts with weekly Preserve volunteer maintenance activities.
Note: Due to increased usage of the Preserve's beach—Center programs, Ecobay activities, and general public visitation—during the late spring and summer, the HEE will contact any large, independent groups (e.g., summer camps) observed to have used the Preserve in the past, requesting they communicate their visitation schedule in advance. The purpose is to help prevent any shared space issues and will aid Center program coordination where feasible. This will be completed late March/early April each year.

Check-In Process

SEE Youth Program
If a group is traveling by bus, educators will “reserve” the bus parking area one hour prior to their arrival by posting cones in front of the space. Educators will greet attendees at the kiosk. At the start of every program, any remaining registration forms not submitted in advance will be collected by the HEE. The HEE will also double-check if they should be aware of any pertinent health conditions with the lead teacher (e.g., serious allergies). This information must be communicated to all Center instructors assisting the day-of.

Public Programs
Educators will greet attendees at the kiosk. Before the start of every public program, the EE (or program lead for the day) will check the registration list and waivers in advance. The lead will also have a printed sign-in sheet at all public programs in case there are walk-up participants.

Evaluation/Surveys
The HEE and EE will review and discuss feedback provided in the following surveys on a quarterly basis to ensure the necessary improvements are being made to the best of the Center’s ability:

SEE Youth Program
- **Pre-Survey:** The HEE is responsible for sending out the Pre-Program Survey to the lead teacher ahead of the program. This survey is designed for on-site Preserve programs (a revised version may be developed for programs delivered at an alternative location or virtually). The pre-survey only needs to be completed by the lead teacher/group lead once per
school year for returning students. When feasible, leads/chaperones/parents of homeschool groups will receive printed copies of the pre-survey to complete on-site as well.

- **Post-survey:** The HEE is responsible for sending out the Post-Program Survey to the lead teacher following each program. The post-program survey should be completed after every program, including returning students. The Post-Program Survey will also be administered for virtual and in-school field trips.

- **Sketch-Note:** At the conclusion of each youth program held at the Preserve, students will be asked to complete a sketch-note to communicate their experience. Staff are responsible for taking pictures of the completed work and uploading them to this folder.

  *Note: It is the responsibility of the HEE to manage all youth program surveys and file responses for grant reporting and program evaluation purposes. The EE will assist in filing/uploading the information as needed.*

**Public Programs**

The EE is responsible for sending out a thank you email 1-3 days following every public program which will include a link to the post Public Program Survey. It is the responsibility of the EE to manage the survey responses. Survey responses should be programmed to autofill this document, which will be updated at the beginning of every calendar year. The EE is also responsible for adding individuals’ emails to receive the Center’s newsletter when requested (bulk entries 1-2 times per month recommended for ease).

**Photo Uploads**

Educators are responsible for uploading all photos to the Center’s Photo Drive following each program. Photos should be added to the proper album and given a brief description (i.e. name of group, activity description, date, etc.) for use in public-facing communications materials. All photos uploaded must have a corresponding photo waiver for each minor that’s photographed.

**Outreach Activity Database**

Following each program, the HEE and EE (respective program lead) is responsible for recording participant numbers in the Outreach Activity Database.
For public programs, all individuals (adults & children) should be counted towards the group total. For youth programs, only students should be counted towards the group total (but note the number of adults/chaperones in the activity description box).

Safety

Staff Onboarding & Certification

Education instructors (full time, part-time, seasonal staff) are required to complete a safety orientation session with the HEE. They must also read and sign this Education Program Policies & Procedures document and submit it to their immediate supervisor prior to engaging in any education programs.

The EE will collaborate with the PM to ensure any volunteers assisting with public programs understand the Center’s safety procedures as part of their training.

Background checks must be completed for volunteers recruited to assist with youth education programs. The HEE and PM will work together to ensure checks have been completed.

The HEE, EE, O&EC, and PM are required to maintain CPR/AED and First Aid certification with the American Red Cross. The Center will cover the registration and transportation fees for the certification. At least one certified instructor must be on-site during programs at all times (even if a volunteer or seasonal instructor is leading a program).

Instructor & Chaperone Supervision

Adult supervision during youth programs must be maintained at all times. The Center will abide by the 1:15 adult to child ratio for school-aged children (kindergarten and higher) as outlined in the State of Delaware’s DELACARE Regulations for Early Care and Education and School-Age Centers. A child is identified as an individual under the age of 18. Should the number of children exceed the number of Center staff (and assisting instructors) present, the participating group will be required to provide the necessary number of chaperones to meet the state ratio.
No Center representatives (staff or volunteer) are permitted to be alone with a single child at any time. A third individual such as another adult Center representative or school chaperone must be present.

If participants break into groups with separate leads, it is essential that groups remain within the sight and short walking distance of one another at all times.

**Safety Equipment & Precautions**

The HEE and EE are responsible for maintaining up-to-date and fully-operational safety equipment, including first-aid kits and walkie-talkies. Instructors are required to carry a first-aid kit with them on-site at all times to ensure quick and easy access in the event of an injury. When groups divide, each instructor is required to carry both a first-aid kit and walkie-talkie to remain in constant communication with the other group. At the time of the completion of this document, the Center does not currently have an AED. This is recommended and anticipated to be acquired in FY22 as part of the James Farm Master Plan.

The HEE and EE are also responsible for regularly checking the safety and function of all education equipment (e.g., dip nets and collection jars are not broken with sharp edges) to prevent any injuries.

Under no circumstances is swimming permitted during education programs. Should participants wish to swim before/after the program, this must be done on their own time with the clear and documented understanding (e.g., email, website, program overview, etc.) that no Center representative or lifeguard will be present. Instructors must clearly distinguish the start and end of each program.

Participants are not permitted to bring their dogs while engaging in any education programs, with the exception of any service animal.

Center educators must be aware that every participants’ personal experience and comfort level with the outdoors are different. At no point will a participant be forced to go into the water or handle an organism if they do not want to. Staff must be attentive and respectful of people’s varying comfort levels.
Emergencies & Disturbances

Center staff and volunteers should not put themselves or others in harm's way for any reason. In the event of an emergency or perceived threat (per the instructor’s best judgment), the instructor must immediately direct all participants to a safer location and call 911.

Recommendations on how to address an emergency or unsafe situation (e.g., staff/participant injury, aggressive dog off-leash, dog bite) while leading a program:

- If two instructors are directing one group: One instructor will continue to lead the activity while the other addresses the situation using best judgment.
- If two instructors are directing separate groups: Instructors radio each other to merge into one group, allowing one individual to continue the instruction while the other individual addresses the situation using best judgment.
- If one instructor is present with at least one chaperone: Pause instruction and ask the chaperone to supervise the group while the instructor addresses the situation using best judgment within visibility and hearing distance of the group at all times.
- If only one instructor is present with no other adult supervision: Pause all instruction and address the situation using best judgment within visibility and hearing distance of the group at all times.

Individuals with a first-aid certification should respond to injuries accordingly and submit a report following the incident (see below).

Dogs

Sussex County law requires dogs to remain on leash at all times, including at the Preserve. To ensure the safety of everyone, no Center affiliate or program participant is permitted in close proximity to any dogs (leash or no-leash). Should a dog be observed off-leash during an education program, staff are to use their best judgment when addressing the particular situation. The following general steps are recommended:

1. Maintain a safe distance from the dog at all times (self and program participants).
2. Assess the situation and personal comfort level from afar. Be aware the temperament of the dog may change at any moment for any reason.
3. Should they feel comfortable to do so, the instructor may choose to approach the dog owner from a safe distance to politely remind the owner of the county’s leash law. *Be aware the temperament of the dog may change if their owner is approached.*

4. Should the owner dismiss the situation and allow their dog to remain off leash around program participants:
   - Guide participants to a safer location away from the dog.
   - If there is another instructor or chaperone present, have one remain with the group in a safe location while the other calls 911.

People

In the event an aggressive individual approaches the group, instructors are to use their best judgment when handling the particular situation. The following general steps are recommended:

- Remain calm and professional at all times—do not provoke or escalate the individual/situation.
- Maintain a safe distance from the individual at all times (self and program participants) and keep the group together.
- Call 911 (see above on how to best manage while leading a group with or without staff/chaperone support).
- Submit an incident report (see below).

Incident Reports

In the event of an incident (e.g., injury, altercation, property damage, etc.), the Center representative(s) involved and/or alerted must complete an Incident Report immediately after the situation is safe and stabilized. Some of the key details to document include the date, time, location, names of all participants and witnesses, contact information of participants (especially critical for staff to follow up with them), and description of the situation including actions taken to respond. The completed report must be submitted to the Program Manager and immediate supervisor within 24-hours of when the incident occurred.

Blank, hard copies of the report must be kept in the education shed. However, if none are available at the time of the incident, it is recommended that notes be captured on a notepad, cell phone, etc. to ensure key details are not lost by the time the reporting individual is able to complete the formal documentation.
Should the incident involve an injury or property damage, capturing photo evidence is also recommended when possible to be included with the report.

Inclement Weather

The HEE and EE are responsible for monitoring local weather information in the preparation of and planning for all outdoor programs. This is not the responsibility of assisting seasonal instructors, volunteers, or interns. In the event that inclement weather is predicted and poses a risk to the health and well-being of staff and participants (e.g., wind advisory, heavy rain, lightning, flooding, heat advisory, tornado, snow, ice and hail, temperatures below 45 degrees, etc.), programs must be canceled and the necessary participants be notified (via email for public programs; via phone and email for youth programs) at least 24-48 hours prior to the start of the program. The continuation of programs during light, intermittent rain conditions is per the discretion of the HEE and EE—an attempt to contact the visiting group leader to assess their comfort level is recommended.

Should unexpected hazardous conditions or weather occur during a program, all activities must immediately cease and instructors lead participants to the nearest safe refuge (e.g., existing pavilion if no machinery is stored underneath, education building once constructed, tucked into the woods, etc.). When thunder and lightning are present, instructors must direct everyone to clear the beach.

Inclusivity

Center staff are committed to creating a learning environment that is inclusive and welcoming for all participants. Center staff and representatives will treat every participant with fairness and respect, and will be especially mindful of this during any necessary youth disciplinary actions. The HEE will communicate with the lead teacher ahead of time to ensure that teachers and chaperones are aware that they should be involved in the disciplinary process during programs.

Staff will actively strive to learn more about the full scope of stakeholders and reach diverse audiences (e.g., age; identified gender and sexual orientation; social and ethnic background; religion; geographic location; physical, mental, emotional capabilities; etc.) through educational programming. More details on the value(s) and approach(es) to diversity and inclusion Center-wide are currently
under development through the Center’s three-year Strategic Planning process. This document will be updated with the necessary information once finalized.

Acknowledgement of Receipt

I acknowledge having received a copy of the Center’s Education Program Policies & Procedures. I understand that should I have any questions or need further explanation about anything within this document, I can go to my supervisor or the Executive Director for help. I understand that the document is presented as a source of employment information only, and is not a contract. I agree to accept the policies, rules, and procedures of the Center as a condition of my employment.

_______________________________
Employee Signature

______________________________
Printed Name

______________________________
Date