

Below are answers to the narrative questions from the 2024 grant cycle. The three examples are high-quality applications that achieved the top three scores.

Example One - PreK

In no more than two sentences, summarize what the students will be doing on this field trip.

Students will take a trip to Rock Springs Nature Center to compare and contrast oak leaves and acorns versus pine needles and pine cones. Students will learn about and discuss what types of forest animals benefit from the available food supply and what might these forest species do if there is a food supply shortage. Students will use a "Wildlife Bingo!" card to keep track of the species observed.

How does this field trip support what you are teaching in the curriculum? Do not list learning standards.

Every year in April, Fundamentals Early Learning Academy four-year-olds spend a week learning about different Illinois tree species and the types of leaves produced by these species. We also learn about the different types of fruits/nuts local tree species produce and what forest animals benefit from this food supply.

In May we learn about the different bird and mammal species we may find in a forest habitat. We learn about some of the adaptations the animals have and use to survive. We will discuss what could lead to some food shortages, (drought, floods, fire, etc.) and what the local animals might do if there is a shortage.

What do you want the students to learn from this field trip?

Students should be able to identify leaves and pine needles.

Students should be able to identify pine cones and acorns.

Students will learn about and be able to identify several different animal species that use forests for food and shelter.

Students will discuss what these animal species may do if there is a food shortage. What adaptation can/will they use?

We will also be borrowing the Field Trip Pack so the students can get some experience with simple scientific equipment like binoculars and magnifying glasses.

How will you evaluate student learning from the field trip?

We will discuss with students the different animals observed by looking at their "Wildlife Bingo!" card. Students will draw pictures of their favorite animals they observed. Students will sort items from a box containing pine cones and acorns.

The field trip must relate directly to Illinois' natural resources. Explain how you are basing this field trip on one or more of these Illinois' natural resources categories. Be specific.

a. aquatics b. geology c. native wildlife d. native plants e. prairies f. woodlands/forests

woodlands/forests - Students should be able to identify leaves and pine needles.

woodlands/forests - Students should be able to identify pine cones and acorns.

native wildlife - Students will learn about and be able to identify several different animal species that use forests for food and shelter.

native wildlife - Students will discuss what these animal species may do if there is a food shortage.

What adaptations can/will they use?

Discuss resources being used to support this field trip other than *Illinois Biodiversity Field Trip Grant* funds.

Donations, volunteers and school resources are some examples of these other resources. If no other resources are being provided for the field trip, state that information in your response.

We will schedule the use of the Illinois Tree Truck, Illinois Wild Mammals Trunk and the Illinois Birds Trunk for classroom use prior to our trip. We will reserve the Field Trip Pack for our trip. Rock Springs Nature Center hosts all of these resources. The school is providing bag lunches for the students along with all necessary school supplies, including the "Wildlife Bingo!" card and crayons.

What else would you like for the judges to know about this field trip?

Our students don't seem to get outside the confines of the city very much. This trip, at a young age, to a nice outdoor facility close to home, may just jump-start a love of the outdoors.

We will be bringing an additional four adult chaperons.

Example Two – Grads 6 to 8

In no more than two sentences, summarize what the students will be doing on this field trip.

Students will be canoeing the Cache River and visiting the Wetlands center. In addition, students will be taking part in a watershed research project.

How does this field trip support what you are teaching in the curriculum? Do not list learning standards.

This fieldtrip will reinforce the curriculum taught in class about protecting the environment and the negative effects of human behaviors. More specifically, it will give firsthand experience with the unit I am teaching on watersheds and the importance of protecting and keeping them a clean source of water. We will also learn how we can check if a watershed (or any body of water) is "healthy" or polluted and how it may have become this way.

What do you want the students to learn from this field trip?

In addition to exposing students to many things that the Cache River canoeing tour and Wetlands center has to offer, I will be focusing the majority of learning on the importance of protecting watersheds and the importance of it remaining a clean, sustainable source of water. The students will be scooping out and identifying many different species in the Cache River and being taught how to identify the pollution level based on which species are able to live in that particular body of water.

I would also like the students to learn about the many species of animals that live in and around the Cache River and the importance of providing a safe haven for such populations to thrive.

We will also focus on the negative impacts of human behaviors on watersheds, natural habitats and species population.

How will you evaluate student learning from the field trip?

Students will receive a “macroinvertebrate identifier key” at the Wetlands Center that will show them which species are resilient at which levels of (non)pollution. Students will learn (at the Wetlands Center) how to seim a body of water to collect and look for the invertebrates that are present in the water. They will then compare to the ID key and determine how “clean” or “polluted” that the Cache River is. They will do this at 3 different sites in the park and log their data into a table.

After the field trip, students will apply this learned knowledge as we will visit 2 other local water sources near our school. We will use the tools and ID sheet to collect and ID invertebrates and thus determine if these 2 bodies of water would be considered “clean” or “polluted” and compare it to the Cache watershed. We would also follow up with why and how these other sources came to be this way and what may change these findings.

The field trip must relate directly to Illinois' natural resources. Explain how you are basing this field trip on one or more of these Illinois' natural resources categories. Be specific.

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The fieldtrip is specifically centered around aquatics and secondly focused on wildlife species. The project that students will complete focuses on healthy or polluted watersheds which is determined by the aquatic species that are able to live in the body of water. The students will be extracting these species from the water and identifying them according to a given chart. The fieldtrip will also focus around native species when the students visit the Watershed Center where there are many different live species that they will get to see and learn about. Students will also be encouraged to take note and log any wildlife that is seen during the canoe tour and the hike.

Discuss resources being used to support this field trip other than *Illinois Biodiversity Field Trip Grant* funds. Donations, volunteers and school resources are some examples of these other resources. If no other resources are being provided for the field trip, state that information in your response.

I am also applying for the “Kids to the Cache” \$250 grant that will provide for other resources for the students to use while on their trip. I have in mind to purchase scat ID charts, butterfly ID charts and 25 small nets for the students to seim the invertebrates.

There will be approximately 5 parents that will be volunteering to attend the field trip and after study program.

Example Three – Grades 10 - 12

In no more than two sentences, summarize what the students will be doing on this field trip.

Students on the field trip to Cache River State Natural Area will explore the ancient floodplain carved by glacial floodwaters in order to deepen their understanding of the region's natural wonders.

How does this field trip support what you are teaching in the curriculum? Do not list learning standards.

Application of Classroom Knowledge:

The field trip allows students to apply theoretical knowledge acquired in the classroom to real-world scenarios. Concepts learned in botany and ecology classes will come to life as students observe and analyze the unique plant life in the natural area.

Critical Thinking and Inquiry:

Encountering various plant species, wetland environments, and conservation challenges will prompt students to ask questions, think critically, and engage in scientific inquiry. This fosters a curious and investigative mindset.

Overall, the field trip provides a comprehensive educational experience, combining scientific exploration, ecological awareness, and a connection to the cultural and conservation significance of the Cache River ecosystem. Students will leave with a deeper appreciation for the natural world and the importance of preserving native plants and wildlife.

What do you want the students to learn from this field trip?

Biodiversity and Plant Identification:

Students will learn about the rich biodiversity of the region, including various plant species. The trip provides an opportunity for hands-on plant identification, allowing students to apply their botanical knowledge in a real-world context.

Adaptations of Wetland Plants:

Observing the wetland ecosystems, students will learn about the unique adaptations of plants to thrive in these environments. This includes understanding how plants have evolved to tolerate waterlogged conditions and contribute to the overall ecological balance.

Ecosystem Interactions:

How will you evaluate student learning from the field trip?

Field Journals and Reflections:

Have students keep field journals throughout the trip, documenting observations, questions, and reflections on what they've learned.

Ask them to write reflective essays or reports upon returning, summarizing key insights and connecting their observations to classroom knowledge.

Species Identification and Documentation:

Assess students' ability to identify and document plant and animal species observed during the trip. This can be through a species list, annotated photographs, or sketches. Include questions about the characteristics and adaptations of specific species

encountered. Class Discussions:

Facilitate class discussions where students share their experiences, observations, and insights from the field trip.

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The field trip to Cache River State Natural Area is closely related to native plants and wildlife in several ways:

Rich Biodiversity: The area is home to a diverse array of native plant and animal species. Students on the field trip have the opportunity to observe, study, and appreciate the richness of biodiversity in this ecosystem.

Cypress Trees and Wetland Plants: The presence of massive cypress trees, with their unique buttresses, highlights the significance of native trees in the region. Additionally, the wetlands are crucial habitats for various native wetland plants, contributing to the overall diversity of the ecosystem.

Endangered and Threatened Species: Cache River State Natural Area is home to over 100 plant and animal species that have been listed as endangered or threatened by the State of Illinois.