



**Zoo School Handbook  
Chevron Open Minds Program**

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## I. Welcome to Zoo School!

We look forward to having you and your class at Zoo School. We know it will be an adventure you won't forget! Your week at Zoo School will provide you and your students with a wealth of first hand experiences and memories. The connections you make to the week throughout the year will make the whole experience very rich. Every week is different, depending on the major focus each teacher wishes to develop. Your proposal shows that much thought has already been given to this program. We hope to help you in your journey of planning and developing your ideas for Zoo school with this information package, the in-services and the planning meeting held closer to the time you come to Zoo School. Chevron Zoo School is one of many programs offered at the Calgary Zoo to help the Zoo fulfil its vision and mission.

### **Calgary Zoo's Vision**

To be Canada's leader in wildlife conservation.

### **Calgary Zoo's Mission**

Take and inspire action to sustain wildlife and wild places.

Chevron Canada Resources provides funding for the Chevron Open Minds Program. This project involves on-site education at three campuses around Calgary including the Calgary Zoo, the Glenbow Museum, and Telus Spark Science Centre. Zoo School is made possible by a partnership between Chevron Canada Resources and the Calgary Zoological Society.



## II. Planning and Preparing for Zoo School

You have already begun the "big idea" planning process by completing your Zoo School application. The ideal plan is based on an "all encompassing" idea that will connect many of the Program of Studies expectations from different subject areas. This idea will include Zoo School as only one week within the larger plan, and should also include many other experiences (such as in-class projects, guest speakers, literature and journaling). The plan can be developed for a long-term study, or can even become the focus for your entire school year! Plans are only plans and may have to be modified if you change grades, or schools, or just because you have a new idea.

- A. **Welcome and Orientation** – This will introduce you to the Calgary Zoo and the Chevron Zoo School program.
- B. **Summer Teacher In-service**- The summer in-service will be full of ideas and experiences to assist you in your planning and preparation and will take place at the zoo.
- C. **“Big picture” Planning Meeting** is held with the Zoo School Coordinator and the Open Minds Education Director approximately two to three months before your Zoo School week. The goal of this meeting is to look at your year plan and think about entry points in your curriculum where Zoo School related ideas might fit. We will discuss suggestions for inquiry and investigations during your Zoo School week and begin to construct a schedule. The final schedule will be sent to you by the Zoo School coordinator once everything has been planned out at the zoo.
- D. **School Visit.** A Zoo School Ambassador will visit your school the week before you come to the Zoo. The Zoo School Ambassador will talk to your students about “Zoo Etiquette”, review how to prepare for Zoo School, do some bio-fact activities, tell stories and answer student questions. We will propose a time and date for your Zoo School Ambassador to come to your school at the beginning of the year to allow you to plan around this crucial visit. If anything changes throughout the year, we can rearrange the date, however please contact the Zoo School Ambassador immediately to let them know. Their contact details are: Pauline Davies (p\_robby\_d@hotmail.com) and Dawn Hardy (dawnhardy@hotmail.com).

### III. Your Week at the Zoo

Each class that comes to Zoo School will have a unique week that will be developed around the individual teacher’s long-term plans and ideally, student interest. When planning your week, consider the following:

#### A. Core Programs/Activities During the Week:

- **Focussed Observation Time** - Zoo School offers your students an opportunity to discover the true meaning of “observation.” With the Zoo School Coordinator as a resource person, we’ll develop a one hour per day focussed observation time around your big idea and/or student questions. Focussed observations allows students the opportunities to improve observation, sketching and writing skills, examine an issue or question more deeply and make connections to previous learning. It can also help them to see real-world applications that relate to your big idea - a truly vital part in developing the students’ future ideas and beliefs about conservation. If you choose these times to be animal observations, it is advised that students do some research on their observation animals before their week. Before you begin your

research, **check with the Zoo School Coordinator** when selecting animals for observations. **Please also have your students organized into observation groups before you come.** \* See the “Learning to Observe Animals” handout.

- **Special Animal Encounter (Behind the Scenes)** - Each class is given the rare opportunity of having a special, up-close encounter with one of our animals. Schedules for these are arranged in advance and we are unable to fill special requests made by schools.

B. Optional Programs

- **Discovery and Ed-venture Programs** (1 per class). These programs are school programs which focus on specific topics and are applicable to the Alberta curriculum. Each program is taught by Zoo staff, runs approximately 1 - 1.5 hours (depending on grade level), and is booked in advance by the Zoo School Coordinator.
- **Animal Ambassador Visit (Creature Feature)** - This is a wonderful opportunity for students to learn about the Calgary Zoo’s collection of “handleable” animals. The animals in this collection are rescue animals, or trained animals, that cannot be released into the wild. The Zoo School Coordinator or Zoo staff will bring out an animal for a 15-30 minute visit, and share some natural history of the animal. Some animals can even be touched!

C. Teacher Led Programs and Activities

The remaining time each day is determined by you and your focus for the week. The coordinator can arrange to have other Zoo experts visit with your class or you may want to lead activities on your own. Remember to use the Zoo as much as possible when developing ideas. Activities that are classroom based can always be completed at your school.

D. To Be Announced Sections

We will purposely leave some TBA sections in the schedule to allow for teachable moments, exploration and student interest. This also creates flexibility for inclement weather and other unforeseen scenarios.

IV. Preparing Yourself and Your Students for Zoo School

A. Pre-Zoo School Activities

In order for you to make the best use of your time at the Zoo, students should have developed certain skills and a knowledge base before they come to Zoo School. Here are some examples:

- Animal research, if students are doing animal observations. Students should know something about “their” observation animal before arriving.
- Observation skills and techniques should be practiced in the classroom. Doing preliminary observations before coming to the Zoo greatly increases the quality of

observations. See **“Learning to Observe Animals”** handout.

- Sketching skills- as a tool for recording observations.
- Journal writing is an important skill that is developed with experience. In their journals, students can record their observations, draw, and write reflectively about their experiences. This is an extremely useful part of the students’ learning. Students should begin using their journals well before their week at the Zoo.
- Environment and Conservation – The Zoo is a great way to connect kids to the environment. This is a great entry point to look at how we interact with our environment, how the environment affects us, and how we affect the environment.
- Vocabulary development, descriptive writing.

#### B. Zoo School Week Checklists

You and your students will want to come prepared for the weather and a variety of activities during the week:

##### 1. **Student List** (all things of value should be labeled)

- pencils, pencil sharpener and eraser
- observation journals
- plastic water bottle
- appropriate clothing
  - winter- long johns/snow pants, extra sweater, toques, gloves, scarf, boots, extra socks
  - spring/fall- hat, sun screen, water bottle, rain gear
- **camera (optional and should have limits around use)**
- garbage-less, nutritious lunch and extra snacks

**\*\*\*We recommend that students do not bring money for food or shopping in the gift shops.\*\*\***

##### 2. **Teacher List**

- Open Minds media release forms (student and parent)
- Student health forms

Teachers are responsible for being aware of any health concerns. During Zoo School, you should have emergency numbers and Alberta Health Care numbers for each child. These do not need to be given to the Zoo School Coordinator however, they should be brought with you in case of an emergency. **Please note any children with nut or other severe allergies please advise the Coordinator.**

- Art supplies and school supplies as you require
- Parent information, supplies and journals
- Camera (optional)

#### V. Zoo Resources, Supplies and Journals

## **A. Zoo Resources**

- **Tom Baines Classroom** - this on-site classroom is available exclusively for your class all week. Washrooms, tables and chairs, a large white board, flipchart, carpeted gathering area, sink, kettle and mugs, basic supplies such as scissors and rulers, are available. Other equipment includes a plasma screen, laptop connections, and cassette player. **Name tags** are available to students for the duration of the week. Please note: there is no water fountain in the classroom; students should bring water bottles with them. We also have recycling and composting available.
- **Zoo School Coordinator** - The Zoo School Coordinator will work with you as a team teacher and resource person. The Coordinator is involved with facilitating learning opportunities as requested by you, is a resource for you and your students, and will also be involved in planning, booking programs and scheduling. The Zoo School Coordinator also has access to biofacts (examples of biological materials/articles that have come from animals, plants and nature), which may be useful for certain activities and programs.

## **B. School Supplies, Art Supplies**

School supplies, copied and other materials, are not included in the Zoo School fee. Teachers should ensure all students come prepared for Zoo school, and should bring all necessary materials for the week. A ziplock bag for each group works wonders to keep these all together.

## **C. Notebooks/Journals/Observation books**

Students should have a special journal to use prior to and during their week at the Zoo. This book can be used at school for sketching, vocabulary, observation skill development, journaling, etc. The journal will be used at the Zoo to record observations, for journal writing, drawing, keeping a copy of their week schedule, etc. Group leaders (parent volunteers) should also have a journal to use while at the Zoo. One journal to consider is: VISUAL JOURNALS, from Topline ordered through ORICAL at your school. These are 8.5" X 11" with approximately 80 pages and a cost of \$4.45 each. If you have any further questions in regards to this please contact – Linda Moxie @ 403-817-7496

## **VI. Bussing, Forms, Payment and Other Information**

### **A. Buses**

The cost of the bus and the booking of the bus is looked after by Zoo School. Southland Transportation is the bussing company and the Zoo School Coordinator makes all of the arrangements with Southland.

### **B. Forms**

Teachers are required to complete all of the forms as required by their school board. Information to help you complete the forms and a service provider contract will be

provided at the planning meeting.

### **C. Payment**

For the 2015-2016 school year, the cost for the week is now \$1250, and \$1500 for independent schools. For an average class of 25 students, that's \$50/student or \$10/day for the program. This fee includes bussing, optional programs requests as well as professional development for you throughout the year in the form of workshops, newsletters, articles, updates and support from coordinators. The Coordinator will provide a **quote letter** for payment at the planning meeting and payment can be made via cheque or credit card.

### **D. Parent Information and Media Release Forms**

An information sheet and media release form will be provided to you by the Coordinator at the planning meeting. These need to be copied and sent home well ahead of time. The Media Release form for Students and Parents should be **signed and returned to the Zoo School Coordinator on the first day of Zoo School**. As part of our funding agreement, we require each student have their parent or guardian complete the release form. This allows us to use video footage, pictures and written works from different classes to be used in promoting the Chevron Open Minds Program. Please inform the Zoo School Coordinator if you have not received all of the forms or students/adults do not give consent.

### **E. Health Concerns**

Teachers are responsible for being aware of any health concerns. During Zoo School you should have emergency numbers and Alberta Health Care numbers for each child. These do not need to be given to the Zoo School Coordinator; however, they should be brought with you in case of emergency. Please note: The Zoo School Coordinator must be made aware of any student allergies prior to Zoo School.

### **F. Emergencies**

Many staff, including your Zoo School Coordinator, have First Aid training. A First Aid kit is located in the Tom Baines Classroom. First Aid is also available from Security staff. In the case of very urgent family emergencies only, children, teachers, leaders and volunteers can be contacted through the Security Office at 403-232-9341. Since we are at different locations in the Zoo, contact information for the Zoo School Coordinator while on site will be provided at the planning meeting.

## **VII. Supervision, Volunteers and Behavior Expectations**

### **A. Teacher Supervision**

The Tom Baines Classroom is considered your classroom for the week. Teacher responsibility with respect to class supervision, safety, and discipline is the same at Zoo School as it is at your regular school. Classroom management and classroom atmosphere is created by each individual teacher. Use of the playground during Zoo School is discouraged. If there is a special situation where the playground might be used, the

teacher must be present when students are visiting the playground areas.

## **B. Volunteers**

Volunteers are essential to the program as the Zoo is a very large place! The students will be divided into four to six observation groups, **so a volunteer is required for each group each day.** In the past, some schools have had difficulty finding enough volunteers, so start recruiting early in the year. It is best if you can meet with the volunteers and discuss their role beforehand. Having them attend the student orientation with the Zoo Ambassador the week before Zoo School would be useful. It is also best if the volunteer leaders can be with the group for the entire week. Observation journals (the same ones that the children have) should also be made available to the volunteers so they can model journaling and be active participants during observation time.

## **C. Student Behavioral Expectations While at the Zoo**

The Zoo is home to many species of exciting and interesting animals, plants and even dinosaurs! All of us, including Zoo staff and visitors are guests within the animals' "homes" and our behaviour while at the Zoo is a reflection of our respect for them. Considering the nature of our facility, **teachers and leaders must set up expectations and standards of behaviour for students** while at the Zoo. In order to maintain this, a 1-4 (lower elementary), 1-5 (upper elementary) and 1-9 (grades 7-12), adult chaperone to student ratio is expected. The following is a review of "Zoo Etiquette" and behaviours while on Zoo Grounds. This information will be reviewed during the in-class presentation.

## **D. Zoo Etiquette**

Zoo Etiquette means showing respect for the animals which helps them to feel more comfortable in their home. By following Zoo etiquette, the animals feel more comfortable, but the students will also be rewarded. Your students will see behaviour which the animals display only when they feel comfortable. This can make for an unforgettable experience!

- Gorillas - No one likes to be stared at. They will feel more comfortable if you crouch down near the glass and avoid direct eye contact when viewing them.
- Be respectful to the animals by not yelling at, roaring at, teasing or imitating the animals (i.e. Howling at the wolves, roaring at the lions)
- Please don't tap on the glass as this disturbs the animals inside.
- Keep your voices down inside the buildings.
- **Walk** to your destinations around the Zoo.

With over 10 000 visitors a day in our peak season, Zoo school students also need to be aware that they share this terrific facility with others Zoo visitors, and certain areas can be

extremely crowded. There are also a number of mothers, toddlers and babies in strollers on the Zoo grounds, and students should be considerate of them.

Cooperation with Zoo Staff, helping maintain a clean space, and showing respect for the animals will create a positive atmosphere for all visitors.

### **Unacceptable Behaviours**

The following behaviours are considered unacceptable. Please discuss these with your students before entering the Zoo.

- Running, tapping on glass, climbing fences, throwing things into the enclosure, making loud noises, or disrupting the animals in any way.
- The Prehistoric Park is a unique display that recreates the Mesozoic era. This area is extremely fragile and is easily damaged. Please ensure that students do not climb on the exhibits, and always stay on the pathways.
- Students should be aware that chasing or feeding any of the animals at the Zoo can seriously affect the animals' health and will not be tolerated.

### **VIII. Thank You's, Program Evaluation, Letters of Support and Samples of Student Work**

After children have had such a fulfilling educational experience, creating gestures of thanks offers them an opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings. Sending thank you letters/videos/artwork to Chevron and acknowledging their sponsorship of the program is very important. Letters to Chevron and the other supporters and/or Zoo staff and volunteers can be sent to the Zoo School Coordinator and will be forwarded to the appropriate people. We would also appreciate receiving examples of student work that we can use in displays, our annual reports and/or show to other teachers. Teachers and sometimes parents will be asked to submit an evaluation of the program upon completion of their week. Thank you in advance for these contributions!

**I look forward to working with you this year and to building a strong and positive learning experience for both you and your students!**