

September 25, 2015

Dear Seventh Grade Parents,

The seventh grade students and staff will have the opportunity to participate in a five-day residential Outdoor Education program. The professional staff of the Palmyra Middle School and the district administration has planned this opportunity. This program has been approved and is supported by the Palmyra School Board as a continuing seventh grade school program.

Students who participate in the spring program must be in attendance all five days. Students may not leave camp for any reason, except a family emergency. Students may not leave for doctor, orthodontist, team practices/games, dance rehearsals, etc. Please make sure your child's schedule is clear of conflicts for their week of camp.

A parent meeting has been scheduled at the **Palmyra Middle School auditorium from 7:00-8:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 12th** to help you understand and appreciate what the resident Outdoor Education experience means to your child. Attached is some of the basic information, which may help you better understand this complex and exciting school program.

The Palmyra Middle School staff feels a special responsibility to the parents of the children whom we serve. Questions you might have will be addressed at the November 12th meeting.

The Outdoor Education program has been designed to provide an experience that will be educationally and socially meaningful to your child. I feel that, for the experience to reach its full potential, parental assistance and support are crucial. Your cooperation in this effort will be most appreciated by your child.

I hope to see you on Thursday, November 12th at 7:00 p.m. in the Palmyra Middle School Auditorium.

Sincerely,

Michelle Waiter
Outdoor Education Director

1. What is Outdoor Education?

Outdoor Education is, as the title implies, the utilization of the out-of-doors as a learning laboratory where participants can directly experience interaction with their natural and human environments. It is not a separate discipline with its own prescribed objectives, but a learning climate, wherein the school curriculum is enriched through direct experiences.

2. Where will the program be held?

The Outdoor Education Program will be held at Camp Swatara. Camp Swatara is an accredited member of the American Camping Association. The camp has officially passed the high health, safety, sanitary site and facilities, personnel, program administrators, and transportation standards of the largest professional camping organization in the world. The camp is located two miles north of Interstate #78 at the Frystown Exit (Route 645). Camp Swatara is owned and operated by the Church of the Brethren.

3. What are the expectations/consequences of my child while at camp?

Outdoor Education is a privilege, not a right. Therefore a behavior contract will be given for **both** you and your child to sign before attending Outdoor Education. If you would like to preview the behavior contract before May, I will have it available for you to view at the Parent Informational Meeting on Wednesday, November 6th or upon request.

4. What will my child eat?

Your child will receive a nutritionally balanced diet consisting of three meals a day and an evening snack. The meals are prepared by the camp's full-time cooking staff. If your child has food allergies, you can address them in March when a Health Form will come home to ask about those individual needs.

5. Who will be on the staff?

The Outdoor Education Program staff will include the Outdoor Education Director, Palmyra Middle School seventh grade teachers, other members of the Palmyra Middle School teaching staff, a full-time nurse, several high school student counselors, and one administrator.

6. Will the students be supervised at all times?

An adult will supervise every activity of the Outdoor Education Program. The Outdoor Education Program Staff will be on duty 24 hours a day. This supervision will offer each child the opportunity to receive competent adult guidance in the many experiences that he/she will have and the responsibilities that your child will assume.

7. How are emergencies handled?

A nurse will reside at the camp during the entire week. In the case that medical attention is required, your child will be covered by insurance from the time he/she leaves home until he/she returns from Camp Swatara. Medical forms will be sent home in March. At this time you may alert me of any special needs or concerns.

8. What will my child be doing at camp?

The activities at Outdoor Education will be many and varied. Some of the areas of the environmental education program offered will include forest and field ecology, stream study, map and compass work, group socialization skills, geology, survival, astronomy, watersheds, music and art. Being in a camp situation will also mean that students will have to assume certain responsibilities. They will need to make their bed, set tables, serve food, sweep floors, make new friends, try new things, share in many experiences, and HAVE FUN.

9. What does a typical daily schedule look like?

The following is a typical daily schedule at Outdoor Education. The schedule may be adjusted on any given day to allow for flexibility in scheduling that day's activities:

DAILY SCHEDULE

6:45	Rise/Personal Hygiene
7:15	Morning Program/Exercises
8:00	Breakfast
9:00	Class #1
9:50	Class #2
10:40	Class #3
11:30	Cabin Time/Rest/Set Tables
12:00	Lunch
1:00	Structured Recreation (Boating, Hiking, etc.)
2:15	Class #4
3:05	Class #5
3:55	Class #6
4:45	Cabin Time/Rest/Diary Writing
5:15	Dinner
6:15	Evening Recreation (Softball, Volleyball, etc.)
7:30	Showers
8:00	Evening Activity (Square Dance, Movie, Campfire)
9:30	Snack
10:00	Lights Out

10. How long will my child stay at camp?

Each team will stay for a period of five days. Students must be attendance for the full five days at camp. They may not leave for any reason other than a family emergency. Students will arrive at the usual school time on the Monday morning they are to attend camp. We will be loading up their gear shortly after and they will arrive around 10:00 by school bus at Camp Swatara. The bus will pick them up Friday afternoon so that they may be returned to the school before their regular dismissal time. **Parents to come to school at 2:00 p.m. on Friday, in the back parking lot to pick up your child.** This will help us alleviate a very serious traffic problem at the regular dismissal time. Again use the parking area behind the school.

Note: Students will be expected to bring their gear to the Middle School auxiliary gym from 7:00-7:30 p.m. on the Sunday evening before they leave for camp.

11. How can I contact my child?

In case of an **emergency** you can call the camp at 717-933-8510. This is the camp office number. A cheerful letter while your child is at camp will do much to enhance the experience for him/her. Mail sent after Wednesday may not reach the children before they leave. Please do not send packages. They may not have any gum, candy, or food in their cabin. The mailing address for Camp Swatara is:

Child's Name
Palmyra Outdoor Education
Camp Swatara
2905 Camp Swatara Road
Bethel, PA 19507-9554

12. May parents visit their child?

A short stay away from parental supervision should be a part of each child's developmental pattern. This experience should be a part of the continued maturation and independence of each child. For these reasons, parents are asked not to visit the children during the five-day period. The parents are, however, encouraged to return to Camp Swatara with their children at a later date. This will give you an excellent opportunity for some wholesome family recreation and a chance for your child to act as a guide to show parents what he/she has learned.

13. What can parents do to make the experience more valuable?

a. Help your child to assume responsibility by:

- Having them make their own bed at home.
- Having them help with table setting and housework.
- Discuss and help them to understand the behavior expectations at camp.

b. Write your camper one or two positive letters during the week.

c. When your child returns home, encourage them in the new interests they may have acquired while at camp.

14. What is the cost of the Outdoor Education Program?

Last year, the cost per student was \$95 for the week. Any child receiving free lunches will be excused from the cost. Any student receiving reduced lunches will pay half-price. The school board should officially set a per student rate at the November school board meeting. Specific payment information and student permission slips will follow this decision in December. In addition, next May each student will be asked to contribute \$3.00 towards the cost of evening snacks and drinks.

15. How should I pay for my child's Outdoor Education experience?

A check or money order made payable to the **Palmyra Area School District** would be best. **Payment must be made by the due date unless prior arrangements are made.**

16. What equipment will my child need?

It is my hope that little or no clothing or equipment will have to be bought for this week of camping. There will be no need for fancy clothing. Children will be more comfortable and will enjoy themselves more if the clothing is not new. Footwear is always an important item of clothing. This is especially true in a camping situation. Make sure that shoes are well broken in before coming to camp. Two pair of sneakers is desirable for outdoor activities (one old pair for working in the stream.) You may wish to include a pair of hiking shoes. All clothing and equipment should be plainly marked with the name of the camper. Rubber stamps or laundry pens provide a quick way of marking. Each child's gear should consist of no more than one suitcase or large duffle bag and a bedding roll or sleeping bag. The camper should assist in the packing of the suitcase and making of the bedroll so that the location of each article is known. An equipment list has been sent home to assist you in planning what to send.

17. When will my child be going to camp?

Topaz Tigers: May 9 – 13

Thundercats: May 16-20

18. When is the commitment deadline for camp?

Commitment for your child to attend camp will be February 5th. I must know for sure if your child will be participating in the Outdoor Education program by that day so that I can prepare and finalize plans for the program.

19. Who should I contact if I have any questions?

Please feel free to contact Mrs. Waiter at 838-1331 opt 3 ext 2 for any questions/concerns or email at michelle_waiter@pasd.us.

Return this to your morning homeroom teach by 9/30/15

Student Name (print): _____ HR _____

I have read the Outdoor Education information packet, have placed the "Dates to Remember" on my calendar, and (please check one of the following)

_____ I will see you at the parent meeting, Thursday, November 12th from 7:00-8:30 p.m. in the middle school auditorium.

_____ I will not be able to attend the parent meeting, Thursday, November 12th at 7:00 P.M.

Parent's/Guardian's Signature

Date