

Volunteer Tips for Teaching for Forest Field Days

(written by volunteer and former teacher, Wylda Cafferata, 7/2018)

Dear Volunteer, thank you for participating in our program! Below are techniques that have worked for some of our volunteers in teaching middle school students. Consider trying those that make sense to you!

Beginning of Presentation

- Get the group's attention before you begin to speak.
- Introduce yourself.
- Explain why you are excited to be here and why the presentation is important
- Use student names.
- If yours is the first presentation of the day, ask students what they expect to learn. If your presentation follows others, ask what students have learned already.
- Set goals for the session: What you want students to accomplish during the session.
- Ask at least one student to repeat the goals. The goal gains authenticity when it is expressed in a student voice.

Presentation

- Insist that your audience pay attention. Side conversations detract from the presentation.
- Allow time for students to share their experiences with the subject matter. Elicit stories from them, but don't allow them to ramble on, using too much of your presentation time.
- When you give directions, be very clear. Then ask for someone in the group to repeat them back to be sure you have been understood.
- Be sure to check for understanding as you present information. Ask questions to make sure students understand. Vary the types of questions you ask. Use some questions that can be answered with yes and no or short answers, some compare and contrast questions, some inferential questions, such as those that start with "why", and some role-playing questions, such as, "If you were in charge of this piece of land..."
- For important questions, use the "think-pair-share" technique. Direct every student to think about the question and then talk it over with the person next to them. Allow time for a few responses to be shared with the whole group.
- If students are taking notes, routinely spell problematic words. Don't wait to be asked.
- Always have extra pencils.

End of Presentation

- Allow time at the end of the presentation for conclusions.
- Repeat the goal and ask students how well it has been accomplished.
- Ask students what they have learned or what they will remember from the session.
- Thank students for their attention, participation, and enthusiasm.

