

## Career Investigations Coop

The coop is currently open to homeschooling 11 to 14 year olds who are planning to homeschool through high school. The purpose of the coop is to have a fairly consistent group of middle schoolers attend field trips on a regular basis, both to explore different career options they may not have considered before, as well as to be able to get to know other homeschooling middle schoolers with similar interests. The coop will involve 2 to 3 field trips each month that focus on exploring different career paths, with each student expected to attend at least 3 or 4 field trips each semester. The coop will be open to new members in January and July each year, with a cap remaining at 20 to 25 students (we'll see how this number works – it may be increased or decreased).

Questions:

1. Why 20 to 25 students?

Hopefully this will be enough students to generate a diverse set of field trips, as well as to let the students meet a wider variety of homeschoolers in their age range. It should also be a large enough group that parents won't have to organize more than 2 field trips a year. On the other hand, it's small enough that students of similar interests should see each other often enough to make some friendships that will carry through to high school!

2. Why not do this through a support group?

I wanted a diverse group of people to get out of our comfortable "ruts" of people we know and the types of field trips our friends might choose to do – it should bring a great range of field trips on topics that we might not have considered. Also, as more middle schoolers go back to school, it would be helpful to know a wider range of students in this age group.

3. Why make this a closed coop with set entry points (January/July)?

A closed coop requires a larger commitment than just a "drop in" or "sign up as we go" group. That's important to ensure that we have a commitment to organize field trips and a consistent group of students attending field trips. However, by indicating twice a year when families can drop out or sign up, it lets families choose to sign up at the times that work for them – and re-evaluate periodically to see if it still works for their family.

4. Will this group only focus on field trips?

Though the main activity with this group will be field trips, in the long run, hopefully friendships and social networks will form so students have a chance to do things with people with similar interests. Also, there may be opportunities for periodic parent discussions on homeschooling topics relevant to the journey of homeschooling middle school through high school.

## How it will work (the initial plan):

- There will be one organizing meeting at the beginning of each semester that parents are expected to attend to brainstorm ideas and share resources. At that time, each family will volunteer for a month during which they will organize a field trip.
- Each field trip will be organized by 2 families. This helps share the responsibility and planning, and ensures at least one organizer can attend the field trip in case of last minute emergencies.
  - Families organizing field trips within the same month will coordinate timing so there aren't 2 field trips in the same week. **The day and time of the field trip are up to the organizers of each field trip.**
- Because the focus is on the 11 to 14 year olds, younger siblings are not encouraged to attend. Each family may need to coordinate with another family in the group to send their 11 to 14 year olds with someone else if they need to.
- Field trip guidelines:
  - Field trips should be within reasonable driving distance of Cary.
  - Limits in the number of students who are able to attend each field trip may be placed, depending on the field trip, with a first-come sign up process.
  - In the event that the field trip costs money, please get feedback from coop members if it will cost more than \$5/student before committing a date.
  - The field trip could be on-site or the speaker could be invited to speak at a conference room at one of the libraries or a park
  - To get a better idea of what's involved in the career, there should be some "field trip" aspect to it, not just a person answering questions about their job. For example, last fall, Benjamin went on a great field trip to the Laser & Photonics Dept at Central Carolina Community College in Lillington. They had a discussion about what Laser/Photonics were, a tour of the labs, and then a hands-on activity.
- Because each field trip will be more meaningful if some basic knowledge is known ahead of time, those setting up the field trip should provide one or two websites for background reading on the facility or topic of the field trip.
- Students attending the field trip are expected to have read the background in order to make the field trip more meaningful and to be able to ask relevant questions.

## Commitment:

- Students: attend at least 3 or 4 field trips during the semester. For each field trip they attend, they should read the background information/websites provided and come somewhat informed of the topic. This isn't meant to be an in-depth study of the topic – but at least glance over the company's website and maybe one other relevant website.

- Each family will set up at least one field trip each semester (January to end of May, August to December).

### Resources:

- Great ideas for different careers to explore for middle schoolers and high schoolers:  
<http://www.khake.com/page64.html>
- [http://www.pte.state.id.us/Forms\\_Publications/Guidance/6Paths16Clusters.pdf](http://www.pte.state.id.us/Forms_Publications/Guidance/6Paths16Clusters.pdf)

### The bottom-line for the coop: RESPECT

Please respect:

- The time and effort put in by the people organizing the field trip
  - RSVP in a timely fashion (using the database option of yahoo groups)
  - If you can't make the field trip, please let that person know as soon as possible.
  - If there is money involved, please pay promptly.
  - Be on time (or early!) for the field trip.
  - If something doesn't go well, please address it in a respectful manner.
- The time and effort put in by the people who are providing the field trip. We are (typically) going into their space, and looking at their livelihoods.
  - Listen respectfully, be informed, ask questions, and conduct yourselves in a respectful manner.
  - Some of the facilities may have fragile equipment or products. We need to be aware of that and act accordingly.
  - Organizers should bring a thank you card for the students to sign and name tags for the students so the field trip providers can easily see names (based on my experience, it makes the students seem much more personable and less anonymous to the people giving the field trip).
- The other coop members.
  - Post field trips in a timely manner on the yahoo group (2 weeks in advance if possible)
  - Address each other directly, not behind each others' backs
  - Be respectful of other peoples' values and outlooks.
- If there are parenting issues or behavior issues that come up, please talk with the parent involved to try to find a solution.

## Initial ideas for field trips (and I'm sure there are many areas I'm not even thinking about!):

- Landscape architects, Architects
- Engineers – auto, civil, etc.
- Park rangers
- National Weather Service
- Behind the scenes at Raleigh Little Theatre or other theatre
- Symphony
- ArtSpace, artists, sculptors, authors
- Veterinarian/Animal hospital
- Behind the scenes at the museum
- Video game developers, animators, graphic designers
- The medical field in all its glory...a shortage of everything right now (doctors, nurses, x-ray, lab work, the ER, the doctor's office, etc.)
- The nonprofit arena
- University science, geology, history, geography departments
- Wake Tech, Central Carolina Community College, Johnston County community college
- Communications – media/journalism, News & Observer, TV stations
- Communication Disorders (SLP) and Deafness Education (teaching sign language in order to translate and bridge the deaf community)
- Financial planning/financial advising