

# **WELCOME TO THE BIG ZOO LESSON (2021-2022): INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS ON GETTING AROUND THE ZOO**

## **Contents**

Welcome!	1
Basics of the Education Building	1
The Team at the Zoo	3
Additional Experiences Available During Your Visit	4
Teacher Checklist for Packing Up on Friday	4
Making the Most out of Animal Observations	5
Animal Observation Options (see separate document)	

## **Welcome!**

Welcome to the BIG Zoo Lesson at the Potter Park Zoo! We are excited about your upcoming visit with your class. You have already worked with Margaret Holtschlag and myself and planned your week (including applicable COVID protocols), or will soon.

I would like to take this opportunity to fill you in on some logistical things here at the zoo and introduce you to our team and procedures within the building.

I hope this information will be useful as you plan for your visit. If you are part of a team coming to the zoo, I hope you will talk about this information with the other teacher(s).

I want to remind you to send your completed lesson plan to Margaret at [biglesson@gmail.com](mailto:biglesson@gmail.com) as soon as you can. You can call her at 517-230-8268.

Please e-mail me or call me regarding any questions or concerns you may have. Please be sure to remind me of the best time to return your call.

[jgarnett@ingham.org](mailto:jgarnett@ingham.org) (zoo)  
517-927-2909 (cell)

Looking forward to seeing you soon!

Jill Garnett  
Site Coordinator  
BIG Zoo Lesson

## **Basics of the Education Building**

### **Behavior**

- Our animals are here to teach us all about their species. The zoo is their home. It is of utmost importance that we respect them and their home. No yelling, banging windows, or throwing things at, near, or around the animals' habitats.
- We also expect everyone to respect each other and the zoo's workers, volunteers, visitors, buildings, and grounds. Cleaning classroom tables and tidying up at the end of the day is much appreciated.

### **Zoo Entrance**

- Enter open "Tours and Programs Enter Here" entrance. If it is not open, you should be able to push it open.

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## **Education Building**

- The classrooms for two classes are in the Education Building, which is just inside the admissions entrance to the right.
- Classes use the building's back doors, one per class. One class enters by the High School Classroom on the side of the building. The other class keeps walking around the corner and enters near the Safari Room.
- Wipe feet outdoors and inside entrance.
- Line shoes and boots up neatly in entry way next to walls and keep them that way when you come and go. Workers and visitors need to be able to walk through the entry without tripping over footwear.
- Bring slippers to wear in building to keep carpets clean. Store slippers under the supply table at the end of each day.
- We recommend that you bring your class's slippers in a box or laundry basket that you can carry directly to your zoo classroom the first day to prevent congestion in the entrance area.

## **Halls**

- Walk and use quiet voices everywhere. People are working in the building.

## **Education Building Classrooms**

- The class entering by the High School Classroom takes the first hallway past the entrance to the right. This class will use the second classroom on the left (Exploration Room 2, or "The African Savanna Room").
- The class entering by the Safari Room continues straight ahead down the hall to the back door of the first classroom on the right (Exploration Room 1, or "The Prehistoric Room"). If you need to pass from one classroom to the other, please use the carpeted hallway and not the uncarpeted (which zookeepers and food service personnel use).
- The classroom doors used by each class are in separate hallways in order to prevent large numbers of students from backing up in one hallway.
- The table arrangement must provide for a safe fire exit. Unless you request a specific table arrangement, we will use our standard class arrangement.
- Check the supply table for a clipboard with your schedule for the week and the Enrichment Team's enrichment schedule for the week.
- Please do not tape anything to the murals on the walls in the classrooms.
- Backpacks are stored against the long wall or under tables.
- Coats are hung on chairs or hangers in the hallway.
- Eat lunch in the classroom and clean up the tables and floor. Empty tables at the end of the day to facilitate cleaning.
- Close classroom doors for loud activities.
- Please turn off the lights in the classrooms when you are leaving for extended times.
- The zoo kitchen is not available for use.

## **Recycling at the Zoo**

We need your help with recycling in the classrooms. There will be recycling bins in each of the classrooms. Please encourage the students to follow the instructions given. Note: Anything with food remnants must go in the garbage.

## **Safari Room**

- This room cannot be reserved in advance for teacher-led activities. If it is available during the week you are here, the site coordinator may make it available for some activities.

## **Bathrooms**

- Parents accompany students for security and monitoring. No student should be left alone.

## **Sensory Concerns**

The zoo has accommodations for individuals with sensory sensitivities. See below as well as our website at [potterparkzoo.org/accessibility/](http://potterparkzoo.org/accessibility/) for more details.

- The zoo is certified Sensory Inclusive by KultureCity. All full-time staff have been trained and equipped with the knowledge to help people with disabilities (such as PTSD, autism, dementia).
- A social story to help prepare individuals for their visit can be found at [potterparkzoo.org/plan-your-visit/](http://potterparkzoo.org/plan-your-visit/)
- Sensory bags, including headphones, sensory map, fidgets, sunglasses, and verbal cue cards, as well as weighted lap pads and Braille map booklets are available for use at the zoo free of charge.
- Signage throughout the zoo identifies headphone zones and quiet areas.
- A quiet room/nursing area is located in the Education Building, to the right of the Safari Room.

## The Team at the Zoo

You will be working with a team here at the zoo to make this the best experience possible for your students.

### Parents (or other adults)

- It helps if you meet with parents and other adult volunteers for specific details and expectations before your visit.
- Their role as teacher, mentor, partner in learning, and student should be emphasized. This is a TEAM.
- Teacher should meet with parents each day before observations to clarify expectations.
- Parents provide discipline to the students during docent lessons and whenever needed.
- Parents may not bring younger siblings with them, as it distracts from the learning of others.
- Parents do not have to pay admission and parking fees when helping with the BIG Zoo Lesson. They should be instructed to tell zoo personnel collecting these fees that they are with the BIG Zoo Lesson and to let Jill Garnett, the Site Coordinator, know if there are problems with this.

### Margaret Holtschlag (Director of BIG Lesson Programs)

- Directs the BIG Zoo Lesson – contact her with questions about registration, training, scheduling BZL weeks, planning your BZL week, materials, resources, etc.
- **Please send your completed lesson plans at least four weeks in advance of your** visit to Margaret at biglesson@gmail.com.
- After you complete your BZL lesson plans, Margaret distributes your plans to other BZL zoo personnel.
- Created the BIG Lessons – History, Zoo, Nature, and Science. Contact Margaret if you are interested in participating in the next school year.

### Jill Garnett (Site Coordinator)

- Works at the zoo with everyone on the team to help everything go as smoothly as possible. Contact her about anything you need.
- She needs to know (1) if anyone has a **relevant allergy, especially to peanuts**, (2) if students **CANNOT have photos taken** of them, and (3) the **number of students** participating.
- Let her know if parents and other helpers are charged for parking or admission.
- Conducts the Species Survival Plan lesson and the enrichment talk and preparation activity.
- Answers questions.
- Usually works every day.

### Dennis Laidler (Zoo Education Curator)

- Works with Margaret to establish the budget and to “grow the program” at other zoos.

### Jennifer Horvatin (Assistant Education Curator) and Megan Weidman (Zoo Program Coordinator & Scheduler)

- Schedule docents for your docent-led lessons.
- Contact them in at the Information Desk in the Education Building about anything you need if Jill is not around.

### Zookeepers

- Zookeepers are cooperative and helpful but very busy.
- If a zookeeper is around, you or the parents should ask if students can ask a few questions.
- Everyone needs to question them politely and respect their time constraints.
- A zookeeper will give a 20-minute talk if that option was selected by teachers at their planning meeting.

### Additional Zoo Experts

**Some expert lessons at the zoo are led by staff and some by volunteer educators.**

- You cannot change schedules for expert lessons when here.
- Everyone needs to question zoo experts politely and respectfully.
- Parents help zoo experts keep students close for best learning.

- Parents provide discipline to the students during expert lessons.
- Students walk to and from the building with or behind the zoo expert for lessons out in the zoo.
- Students raise hands for questions.
- Volunteer experts are with classes for up to three lessons during the week.
- Volunteer experts are also with classes for the enrichment implementation on Friday.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU NOT BE LATE FOR LESSONS WITH ZOO STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS. Their time is very valuable.

## Additional Experiences Available During Your Visit

### Enrichment Team Activities

- Enrichments are conducted by the zoo's Volunteer Enrichment Team on Mondays at 10:45 and 11:00. You are encouraged to observe as part of your Discovery Tour. Enrichments provide a great kick-off to the week. The week's Enrichment Calendar is sent to you in advance if it is available and also included on your clipboard when you arrive.

## Teacher Checklist for Packing Up on Friday

The following is a list to help you with packing up on Friday:

- Have your dependable students and volunteer adults help you with packing your supplies into your transport containers.
- Have students check to see they have all of their own belongings to take back to school, looking under tables and on hall coat racks.
- Have adults check the large Safari Room for any school supplies, if you had any lessons there.
- Have adults do a final check once everything is loaded. Look under tables and chairs and under the front supply table.
- Check to see that all BIG Zoo Lesson supplies are left here for the next classes. See below.

BIG Zoo Lesson supplies to be left in the classroom:

- Dry erase markers, dry erase board cleaner, and rag left at white board
- Clipboard left on table
- Hand sanitizer left at sink
- Zoo ponchos (if used) dried, folded, and placed in plastic bin

Thank you for checking for all of your supplies as well as ours as you leave. We have enjoyed having you here at the zoo. Hope to see you and your class again next year!

## Selecting Study Animals

### BIG Zoo Lesson Animals

Check out the updated list of the BIG Zoo Lesson animal observation options. Consider the information below when you are selecting the study animals.

- \* \* next to the names of the animals indicates that they are likely to be **very good choices** for student study.
- \* indicates that they are likely to be good choices.
- No mark indicates that they are not likely to be good choices.

We want the children to be exposed to as much animal information as possible during their lessons. Consequently, animals that live in groups and tend to be more active make better choices for observation. Many times children are attracted to one specific animal for personal interest reasons. You need to be aware, for example, that if a child is a snow leopard lover, we have only one and he sleeps a lot (like most cats). These limitations should be considered, for they make writing detailed descriptions of the animal's behaviors and interactions difficult.

One part of the list pertains to the **warmer weather animals**. If your class is coming to the zoo during cold weather, animals on this list should **not** be considered. These animals are likely to be inside and unavailable for viewing.

### Second Choices

When you are selecting an animal for each child to have as a main study animal, please plan for **an alternate animal to study** nearby in case the first choice is not available during your week or is not in a good place for viewing on a particular day, and make sure the parents know the alternate plan. When the weather is bitterly cold, your students will appreciate an opportunity to go inside the Feline/Primate House or possibly the Reptile & Small Mammal House to observe an animal in a warm building. A quick warm up while observing another animal can give the children a refreshing new perspective when they return to their primary animal of study.

## Managing Students

### Grouping Students

It has worked well to have small groups of children **work as teams or partners** to study particular animals so they are together for –

- exchanging information
- encouraging each other
- asking and answering questions
- refocusing each other

It is also a good plan to have students work together to facilitate the parents' management efforts. The students can help keep each other focused while parents are checking on other groups in the area and in cases of emergency. Students should not be left alone to wander in the zoo.

### Focusing Students

Your students will be more likely to remain engaged in learning if you have a printed list of things on which to focus at the animal observation location:

- questions for them to ask themselves about their animal
- characteristics to watch for
- details to write about
- animal parts to sketch or illustrate
- activities for them to do

It is also a good idea to provide students with opportunities to practice drawing animals before coming to the zoo. You could use pets or animals in videos as models.

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