

Elder for a Day — Practice and Feedback

Due Friday, April 12, 2019

During our journey through the Southwest, students will be assigned a day to serve as a trip “*Elder*” when they will take responsibility for the well-being of themselves and their peers. This assignment allows students to practice leadership skills and empathy while taking responsibility for the entire group’s success.

Elders will perform the following duties on their assigned day during the trip:

- Wake up all travelers and ensure they are on time to the mess hall.
- Prep the mess hall for all meals, host the meal, and then clean up afterward.
- Distribute sack lunches for day trips and snacks for hikes.
- Assist chaperons during roll call.
- Ensure peers are on time and prepared for hikes, bus rides, etc.
- Introduce our group to museum directors, event hosts and other adults we meet.
- Use a compass and topographic map to navigate on hikes.
- Start and maintain the evening campfire and pass out s’mores!
- Assist chaperons in assigning groups for daily activities.
- Secure, distribute and organize supplies for special activities.
- Actively anticipate and meet the group’s needs as they arise.
- Scan venues upon departure to ensure no personal items or trash are left behind.

The Assignment

To prepare for being a trip *Elder*, students are asked to practice the following outside of school:

Host a dinner for their family, or other group, at home and meet the needs of all present. This would include preparing the meal, serving the meal, checking on everyone’s well-being throughout the meal and cleaning up afterwards.

Serve as the leader on an independent family outing by navigating to the destination, ensuring everyone has what they need, and communicating with adults encountered during the outing. The student should do everything but drive! Adults may verbally help students during these activities, but please let them practice the actual interactions/tasks.

Students may do these activities individually, or in a group of no more than three grade-mates. Families do not need to plan anything special. The “outing” can be something as simple as a trip to a sibling’s soccer practice. The main goal is for students to take on adult-like responsibilities for themselves, and others, like they will in New Mexico. Students should ask themselves questions like:

- “Does my sibling have their gear?”
- “Where is the sunscreen?”
- “What’s the address of our destination?”
- “What time do we need to leave, and does the car have fuel?”

Above all, this practice session and the SWIFT experience itself is meant to be a fun, challenging and educational endeavor. Students learn these skills best when adults allow them to make mistakes as a natural, healthy part of the process. Most importantly, enjoy the process with a smile.

Verification of this assignment will be through an in-class reflective essay on what occurred, what details were considered and what details were issued. Students should also describe how it felt to be in charge of items beyond their own personal needs.

