IISD-ELA High School Environmental Student Learning Experience
Information for Sponsoring Teachers

Dear Sponsoring Teacher,

Please find below general information about an exceptional science experience you may wish to promote with some of your more capable and deserving students. Sponsoring teacher requirements are discussed in the last section.

To meet our goal of providing an extraordinary experience, the organizers require a little of your time to carefully consider the students you recommend for this opportunity.

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July 17–29, 2022, marks the sixth annual IISD Experimental Lakes Area Environmental Science Experience. This field course is offered for students entering 11th or 12th grade in the fall of 2023.

About the Science and Location

The IISD Experimental Lakes Area Environmental Science Research Station (IISD-ELA), located on Treaty Three Lands in northwestern Ontario, is an exceptional natural laboratory composed of 58 small lakes and their watersheds set aside for scientific research. It is one of the only places in the world where it is possible to conduct experiments on whole ecosystems.

This unique research program has influenced billion-dollar decisions of governments and industries and has generated many cost-effective policies, regulations, and management. The science conducted by the world-class researchers at IISD-ELA has resulted in a far greater understanding of environmental issues and significantly reduced human impacts on the natural world—think acid rain, eutrophication, mercury poisoning, aquaculture, oil spills, and climate change. Worldwide, there is no other environmental research station like IISD-ELA.

There may be no better place in Canada for eager and responsible high school students to mentor with established world-class scientists!
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About the High School Student Program

IISD-ELA has been running a field course for high school students since 2014. Students work with their peers, two adult leaders, and participating scientists through long days of observing, helping, asking, answering, doing, and learning a phenomenal amount about environmental science. By engaging directly with the science happening at IISD-ELA, students learn about limnology, the “whole-system” concept, chemistry, ecological interactions, and human impacts on the environment.

Indigenous students and those who identify as being part of a minority are strongly encouraged to apply.

During week one, students will accompany different scientists each day as they continue their fieldwork in a diverse range of practical environmental research programs.

Between weeks one and two, students will regroup, recharge, and plan while on a 4-day refreshing and challenging backcountry canoe trip through the heart of this world-renowned wilderness canoeing area.

During week two, students will follow their own unique path of research, learning more about the processes of environmental science in the field and about the ongoing IISD-ELA science that especially interests them.

Throughout the experience, students will share meal times and evening sessions with scientists; often, these times are when wide-ranging discussions solidify concepts and raise further questions for the next day’s focus.

Transportation, lodging, and all meals are provided. Students will sleep in dormitory-style accommodations at the IISD-ELA field station and in tents when out on their canoe trip.

Sponsoring Teachers’ Requirements

Students will have two highly experienced adults guiding them every day. These two adults will work diligently to connect with and support each student.

That said, students will spend many hours of each day with adults who are scientists, not teachers.

The most successful program will be populated with students who:

- Are responsible and mature for their age.
- Are quite independent and self-sufficient but still ask questions when they need to, especially where safety is involved.
- Are capable communicators who will strive to build respectful relationships with scientists.
- Are physically strong and have at least moderate endurance capabilities, as this is often a physically demanding course.
- Will focus on producing a successful experience for each other, as well as for themselves.
- Are ready to put all their energy into engaging with new experiences, trusting that the way to learn the most from this experience is to invest fully
Please help ensure the success of all participants with your very careful consideration of the student(s) that you recommend. Throughout the participant selection process, we hope you will be willing to discuss any questions we have.

If you have any questions for us, we are happy to respond promptly.

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Pauline Gerrard – education@iisd-ela.org

Thank you very much in advance for promoting this opportunity with your students and sponsoring those few you feel will be most successful in this independent learning atmosphere.

Cost and Bursaries

The cost of the program is $2,000/student for the 13-day period. However, thanks to generous support from The Estate of Robert L. Cooke and many other donors, we have bursary funding available to students who are unable to cover the full cost of the program.

The cost includes travel to the site from Winnipeg, food, accommodation, the use of equipment and laboratory space at IISD-ELA, and the time of two experienced program leaders and the many scientists who will facilitate and guide each student.

To apply for the bursary funding, please include the relevant information in the application form at the link below.

Application Process

Applications for the 2022 course are currently closed. Please check back in early 2023.

The IISD-ELA High School Environmental Student Learning Experience is made possible with generous support from The Estate of Robert L. Cooke and private donors.