

WHAT IS A PROGRAM LEADER?

Program leaders are responsible for facilitating program activities such as: duties, recreation, and mentoring high school student leaders. Program leaders provide training and mentorship to high school student leaders by creating a nurturing and safe learning environment. Program leaders are also responsible for providing written observations and evaluations for student leaders.

Qualities important for a program leader are: reliability, accountability, approachable, team player, empathetic, good communicator, good problem solver, and be able to take care of oneself.

Program leaders are also an integral component to child management on site, responsible for following the discipline procedures of Outdoor School. Program leaders support field instructors and student leaders on field study through teaching small groups, model teaching activities for student leaders and giving them information and tools to be better teachers and child managers.

ODS LINGO

PL = Program Leader

FI = Field Instructor

PM = Personal Mentor
Program Manager
Problem Monitor
Personal Mentee

BZ = Broken Zipper (referring to a wet sleeping bag)

Fire Watch = After the kids are in bed when PL's are responsible for the cabin area while the SLs have a break, though they may come down to visit, depending on site.

Cabin Unattended = Any time when sixth graders are left unsupervised.

SL = Student Leader

SNPL = Special Needs Program Leader

SNEED = Special Needs volunteer

BBQ = Bar-B-Que usually happens on Tuesday or Wednesday lunch.

Roustabouts = Bathroom cleaning duty (site dependant).

Wood Cookie = The wooden nametags we wear.

HOW TO BE A MENTOR

- Lead by example.
- Be approachable.
- Set them up for success early in the week by:
 - Setting goals.
 - Seeing how their goals are progressing and if they'd like help or suggestions about them.
 - Passing on traditions / normal ways of doing things.
 - Co-leading activities.
 - Checking in often.
 - Make time to talk about 'real life' too.
- When problems come up:
 - Address little issues before they are repeated.
 - Help them learn problem solving skills instead of solving everything for them.
- Be flexible.
- Constantly encourage them (they're here, which means we think they're good and believe in them, etc. Point out specific strengths they have – even get them to mentor others in those areas).
- Be genuine – get to know them and show that you like what you're doing and that mentoring them isn't just your 'job', it's what you enjoy doing.
- Give feedback.
- Be a resource for ideas.
- Listen.
- Help foster a positive and supportive community.

HOW AND WHEN TO SET GOALS

- When:
 - The person on the bus with the SL's can have student leaders start thinking about goals. They can take time to set a group goal too.
 - Verbally set one goal on Sunday and explaining that more goals will be set the next day.
 - PM time on Monday is a good time for more in depth goals, since new SLs will have gotten a better idea of what ODS is like by this point.
 - Do a mid-week follow up along with mini daily check-ins.
 - Set daily goals through notes and offer feedback on their goal from the day before.
- How:
 - Make sure their personal goal is their own and not something you make for them.
 - For returning SLs, check their file in the office – they've probably written goals in previous sessions.
 - The eval writing rubric is a good place to get goal ideas.
 - Try to make some tangible goals, or to break a general goal into tangible increments so they can have a sense of achievement.
 - For instance, a goal of "making the cabin a welcoming environment" could break into "reading a story the first night," "knowing the students' names by Monday lunch," "playing 2 games each day," and "doing personal goodnights or a sharing circle each night." That sort of thing.
- Keep a journal between PL and SL to help keep track of goals.
- Make a 'rock of confidence' - they carry it in their pockets at all times, hold it for confidence or have the rock to hold their frustrations.
- Write goals on puzzle pieces and use them as beads on their wood cookie.

WAYS TO BE IN THE CABIN

- Be a visible presence early on and visit often, so the kids and SLs get used to you being around and don't feel like they're being watched when you are there.
- On Sunday:
 - Introduce yourself once the kids are there and explain who you are and that you'll be popping in all week long to visit the cabin – establish the SLs as leaders, though.
 - Read or tell a story or sing a song for the cabin at bedtime.
 - This is good any night, but especially Sunday, since the SLs go to bed at the same time as the kids, so this way they get to enjoy it to.
- During cabin time:
 - Bring bunk tag making supplies early in the week and stay to make one too.
 - Teach a game and then blend into the group and let the SL take over and lead.
 - Hangout in the corner pretending to need a place to warm up or get out of the rain for a minute and use that time to write notes to your SLs.
 - Be there during skit making (you can subtly help facilitate it if the SLs need the help, or be a practice audience).
 - Just hang out and chat with the kids.
- Do something special with the cabin at bedtime:
 - Go on a night hike
 - Looking at the stars
 - Read or tell a story
 - Sing a song or play an instrument
 - Make sure someone else is watching the other cabins if this would normally be your job during that time.

WAYS TO BE IN THE CABIN CONTINUED...

- Send SLs to social hour a bit early and do personal goodnights with the cabin – use this as an opportunity to see how the SLs are relating to their kids by asking questions like “what is something your SL does that you really like?”, or even just “how are things going in the cabin?”
- Transition times:
 - Be a time reminder, but be careful not to be obnoxious or undermine your SLs by pestering them all the time, or telling their cabin to get ready when they could've been about to say it themselves. (Try to give your reminders to the SLs in a way that allows them to still be the leader for their kids).
 - Wait outside chatting with the kids who are ready while the SL wrangles the rest. You get to know the kids, and the SLs will have an easier time getting the rest ready with less to keep track of.
 - If cabins at your site meet up somewhere after meals before walking back to the cabins, hang out at the meeting spot and get to know the kids and walk back with them – you probably need to head to the cabins at that point anyway, so you may as well walk with a cabin and see how things are going.

SKITS AND CABIN CALLS

- As a PL, you should check your PM cabins to make sure their skits and calls are appropriate.
 - Whatever the rules are at your site for ‘appropriateness’ in this area, be sure to let the SLs know.
- Give SLs the tools to facilitate discussions so they don’t end up just making up the skit or call themselves.
- Cabin Calls happen every night at the beginning of campfire and are usually a short cheer or piece of a song that announces to the group that each cabin is present.
 - Some sites have cabin call themes for some days.
 - In the midst of a day at Outdoor School, cabin calls are really easily forgotten by the SL, so they’re always a safe thing to ask about. If they are done, they can always practice for you at that point.
 - Lag times are good for planning cabin calls – whenever a cabin is early for a meal or duty, or while waiting by the bathrooms, etc.
 - One cabin shouldn’t insult another in their cabin call – the student leaders might not know this without being told.
 - If the cabin call is at all complicated, it’s a good idea to have the SL do a quick, silent count off so the group all starts at the same time.
 - Cabin call starter ideas:
 - Rewrite a verse of an ODS song or appropriate real song.
 - Cheers the students know from sports / school events.
 - A simple “Raven rocks!” or “We love ODS” type thing.
- Skits are assigned to different cabins each night. Every cabin will have one, and the day they’re assigned is on the cabin poster.
 - Make sure SL’s know when their skit is and what it will entail early in the week.
 - Start planning skits early – they can sometimes take quite a long time to get organized.
 - Lag times are good for brainstorming skit ideas.
 - Cabin times and BBQ are great for actual planning.
- When planning the skit, it can help to have the SL pass around a “talking object” to limit the chaos.
- Be available to be a practice audience to preview your PM cabins’ skits and to help facilitate details.
- Skit starter ideas:
 - Answer a question about a local animal (how the skunk got its stripe, how the raccoon got its mask, etc.).
 - Raid the costume box for a few random articles and tell the cabin to come up with a skit to use them.
 - There is a book of ODS skits that should be around somewhere at your site that is worth checking out. If your site is okay with canned skits, there are some in there.

SHOWER TIME

For the cabins...not you...PLs don't have time for showers ☺

- Showers work differently at each site, so check with your folks for details and secret tricks to make things work for you, but in general, everyone takes at least one shower during the week, and has the option of a second one.
 - If showers are in the main bathrooms at your site, each cabin has a scheduled shower day, though you might need to organized which spot each cabin gets and in what order with the other PLs.
 - If showers are in the cabin, work with your PMs to pick good days for showers (watch out for things like KP duty after lunch, which would cut into cabin time showering). You'll probably want to plan on two days for showers if they're located in the cabin.
- Things for the PL to do:
 - Prepare a plan with your SL's during your PM time the night before your showers.
 - Be available even if not directly needed. (Things can change quickly).
 - Be flexible.
 - Watch for students having problems with the idea of showering and talk to them about it.
- Things for the SLs to know:
 - When and where they're going.
 - To set expectations before entering the shower area and to explain the process so the students feel comfortable.
 - Have the kids set their shower stuff out earlier in the day to be ready (on the ends of their bunks or in a crate).
 - While showers are going, give frequent time warnings.
 - Keeping students who are not showering busy with games, trivia, or songs.

BEING A GUEST AT MEALS

- Dining Hall Lingo:
 - Guest = Adults at the table (staff, SLs, and teachers). Help with serving and keeping things under control.
 - Host = Student who picks a guest to sit with. Helps serving.
 - Jump Up = Student who goes to the kitchen, brings back serving dishes and refills them as needed.
- Be very purposeful about your actions. Sort of narrate what you are doing and what your host or other guests can/should be doing.
- Make sure you're keeping an eye on the SL at the other end of your table – they might need reminders to get things going.
- Motivate others to follow table manners by verbalizing them (subtly) and example.
- Being aware of an overworked jump-up. They need time to eat too. Adults at the table can take trips for them, or you can ask other kids at the table to do so.
- Empower your host to feel like they're doing a lot, but be sure to serve the more challenging things yourself. (They serve ham, you serve mashed potatoes and peas, that sort of thing).
- If you suspect your host is going to make a disaster of water pouring, ask if they'd like to get the cups ready and pass them out while you pour.
- Facilitate appropriate and inclusive conversation. Some ideas:
 - Would you rather have a third eye or tail?
 - Favorite, superhero, place on earth, form of potatoes, book?
 - If you could live anywhere...?
 - ODS name?
 - Exotic pet?
 - A-Z name some animals.
 - Play 2 truths and a lie.
 - Trading game – Offering something (unrealistic) to someone, trying to find someone you would be willing to trade with. (ie. I'd trade you a week long cruise for a pet monkey!)

PM TIME

- PM time is when you meet with just your own SLs and check in with them in a small group setting. It often happens at the end of the PL/SL meeting, but can vary.
- Before doing other things, check to see if your SLs have any questions from the PL/SL meeting that they didn't ask in the large group. Make sure they got the basic information.
- Different days are well suited to different sorts of activities, but some ideas are:
 - Set goals.
 - Roses and Thorns (everyone shares a good and less good thing about their day).
 - Problem solve from the day.
 - Plan for the next day (“Do you have a plan for showers?”).
 - In general, avoid accepting one word answers...have them explain things.
 - Teach a new game they can use in their cabin.
 - Eat a snack.
 - Take a walk.
 - Help them learn songs for campfire.
 - Go look at the stars.
 - Personality tests .
 - Archery, Frisbee, etc.
 - Apples to Apples or another game.
 - Meet with all the SLs of your gender to cover details of activities like showers, etc that could be different from the basics discussed in the large group.
- If you're going to do “play time” things during PM time, make sure they don't have something going on that they could use help / feedback on first. Playing around is great to build a bond with your SLs, but not so great if they go back to their cabin and realize they have no idea what's going on the next day.

TIMES TO CHECK IN WITH YOUR SLS

- There aren't many official blocks of time set out for checking in with your SLs, look for spare moments whenever you can. They definitely need and appreciate any time you can find to talk to them, whether it's about ODS, or the rest of the world.
- Eat a meal with them on the porch / in the office.
- Have them sit with you on fire watch for a while.
- Let their cabin partner (if there is one) lead the cabin alone for a few minutes during cabin time while you chat outside.
- Skip flag and talk somewhere out of the way.
- Walk them to their field study (if they're not needed by their FI during travel time. This makes you late for yours normally).
- Stand with them in the ‘guest pool’ before the meal starts.
- Sit at their table in the DH and talk with them and the kids at the table (not good for deep personal conversations, but you're still spending time with them).
- Use travel time (walk with them to their cabin, campfire, on the way to the DH, whatever. If there's another SL in the cabin you can hang back a bit and talk. If not, you can still check in while leading the cabin somewhere.
- While they're facilitating showers (depending on site specific location of showers etc.)
- Before and during BBQ.
- Before field day gets going.
- In the cabin for a minute if they're just hanging out for a bit without an actual activity going on.
- During social hour (don't take up all their fun time, though). Have a journal or write notes back and forth. A little notebook makes a great journal for jotting notes back and forth – especially if you attach a tiny pencil to it so they can write whenever.

FEEDBACK TO GIVE – WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- With feedback, specific examples make all the difference!
- These ideas can be feedback during the week or in evals.

- Used names
- Got the cabin to ____ on time (flag, duties, field study)
- Made sure the kids were prepared for the weather
- Set expectations at the door
- Kept kids engaged during wait time
- Smiling / acting friendly and happy
- Talked to a student individually
- Set a good example in ____ (flag, campfire, meal lines) by ____.
- Led a stall song / game for a big group
- Helped on a recreation
- Redirected students positively when ____.
- Helped another SL with ____.
- Helped motivate kids during duties.
- Helped lead / facilitate duties.
- Was aware of individual students' needs.
- Got the students to the nurse on time for meds.
- Was a good role model for peers during ____.
- Always on task without being asked.
- Used enforceable statements.
- Explained activities clearly (give an example).
- Did personal goodnights.
- Came to meetings prepared.
- Asked for feedback.
- Participated in meetings.
- Used their voice tone to let kids know what sort of behavior they should be displaying.
- Involved everyone in cabin clean-up by giving jobs.
- Offered reminders and time warnings to students.

• MORE FEEDBACK IDEAS TO LOOK FOR (YOURS):

WAYS TO HELP RETURNEES GROW

- Remember when you have them help with things that are normally more staffish that you still need to be there to help / look out for them – don't just have them do your job ☺.
- Things to talk about:
 - Let them know what you expect of them as a returning SL.
 - Teach them to be a mentor for other SLs (see other pa.ge).
 - Ask them for something new that they'd like to do.
 - Provide new resources / information (bits of the Love and Logic packet are great for this).
 - Ask their opinions.
 - Work to set more challenging and in depth goals (you can let them check out the eval rubric for ideas).
 - Encourage them to take initiative.
 - Discuss the way they always do things and new stuff they could try – branching out even if the way they do it already is wonderful.
 - Teach songs and activities to new folks (for campfire, during PL/SL meeting if there's time, etc).
 - Have them occasionally help present things in PL/SL meetings.
- Things for them to do:
 - Try to place them in cabins with someone they'll be able to mentor well.
 - Let them do / help with a DH announcement (maybe Z's if they helped with fire watch the night before).
 - Have them lead the cabin's duty (table toppers etc).
 - Let them lead a rec. (if they want -it is their break time) with you supporting them, or leading something else in the area.
 - Have them dismiss the cabin area for field study (if there is a cabin area at your site).
 - Have them model leading a cabin time activity for another SL (they can actually go into a different cabin and do this while their cabin partner or you hangs with their cabin.

HOW TO TEACH AN SL TO BE A MENTOR

- Let them know you'd like them to be one.
- Learn to step back and let them.
- Give them situations where they can step up and lead:
 - Pairing them with a cabin partner who they'll be able to work well with and teach.
 - Ask them to find new SLs to sing songs with at campfire.
 - Have them lead a game with their cabin and another one nearby with a less experienced SL in it.
 - Have them help explain something in the PL/SL meeting.
- Prepare them with ideas of areas they could be a mentor in (point out their strengths), and help them find the less obvious opportunities as well – like at a table in the dining hall or keeping their cabin under control while waiting for the bathrooms.
- Lead by example (if they know you want them to be a mentor, and they see you being one, they know what it looks like).
- Check in.
- Encourage them to find their version of leadership (there are plenty of different ways to be a mentor that can fit in with different styles/personalities).
- Provide resources (new info, supplies if they want to write notes / lead something, etc).
- Facilitate discussions in which they share ideas and begin mentoring others.
 - PM time is great for this. Your PM cabins can share about their days and all offer advice to each other before you give them your own advice. This lets new SLs share their thoughts with each other in a smaller, less intimidating group too, as well as giving the experienced SLs a shot.
- Discuss qualities they've found important in their own mentors and how they can emulate that / make it their own.

NICE THINGS TO DO FOR YOUR SLS

- Bring them tea / coffee during wake ups.
- “Sneak” them cookies and candy.
- Bring fresh fruit (non-ODS stuff).
- Watch their cabin for 5-10 minutes while they sit on the porch and chill (also a good time for them to be able to talk to their cabin partner and plan ahead).
- Eat a meal as an extra adult at their table if you can (you get to talk to them, and also take some of the responsibility of keeping up table conversation off their shoulders for a meal).
- Write notes of encouragement and feedback.
- Try to have some of PM time be to decompress / chill.
- Put their kids to bed for the night or take care of waking them up and getting them going in the morning.
- Give them a bead / some sort of unity thing.
- Let them know ahead of time if it’s going to be your night off and who else will be around covering for you so they’re prepared.
- Keep them as informed as you can based on what you know, especially with schedule changes.
- Draw them pictures and leave them on their bunks as a surprise.

BREAKS!

- Make sure to ask for breaks when you need them. Granted, you may not be able to get one right away, but better to ask than be burnt out and useless at your job.
- During/end of field study
- Meals off (make them count!)
- Nights off
- During campfire – take a quick breather at the back of campfire.
- Rotate wake-ups amongst PL’s if your site can accommodate this.
- These things are all site specific, make sure to check with your site supervisor regarding these times.

RECREATION IDEAS

- Friendship bracelets
- Dream catchers
- Elderberry beads
- Basket weaving
- ODS memory books
- Draw / paint
- Make / write cards
- Shrinky dinks
- Candles
- Origami
- Paper beads
- Sunprints
- Gnome homes
- Sand castles
- Nature mobiles
- Leaf art (rubblings or gluing down)
- Outdoor cooking
- Painting rocks
- Go track hunting and make casts of them
- Egg drop
- Fire castles (make castles – or whatever- out of paper from the recycling bin and burn them with contests for which one looks most realistic on fire, burns the fastest, longest, etc).
- Hike
- Commando hike
- Ultimate Frisbee
- Save the planet rec. (tear out invasive species)
- Archery
- Raccoon circles
- Croquet
- Quidditch as a field game

GAMES FOR CABIN TIME AND SUCH

- Ask around for the explanations, these are just ideas.
- Bop (names)
- Boppidy bop bop bop
- Ducky wucky
- Slap
- Black magic
- Johnny woops
- Minute mysteries/riddles
- Evolution
- Rock paper scissors train
- Rock paper scissors splits
- Draw the moon
- Shoot
- Captains' coming / Statues
- Silent animal tag
- Monkey in the middle
- How's yours?
- Animal signs
- Do you love your neighbor?
- Four is the number of the universe
- Sticks
- River/bank/shore
- Two truths and a lie

- The new SL handbook has some great games with instructions. Check it out!