



O Kids on Campus

□ **DONNA FLUEGEL, WCOC**

What do you get when you cross Marian Jones, Crocodile Dundee and Albert Einstein? An orienteer, that's what.

Combine your love of the outdoors, the exhilaration of hiking through the woods, and the satisfaction of solving puzzles. Learn the use of a compass and a specially made topographic map that shows every cliff and boulder, and every trail and stream. Each day we'll head out to get in touch with nature in many challenging activities.

This is the orienteering workshop blurb in the Kids on Campus brochure that draws 300 (over 500 this past year) children every summer to a day camp in Waterbury, CT. In 2001, children from over 95 different schools throughout Connecticut participated.

In addition to orienteering, students in grades 4 through 10 can sign up for 43 different programs, ranging from creative arts to horseback riding to writing workshops.

How it all started

Three years ago, Don Tall of Western Connecticut Orienteering Club (WCOC) was searching for places that needed orienteering courses. Since he lives up in the northern part of the state, Naugatuck Valley Community College was perfect.

He knew they had a 100-acre forest adjacent to the school with a trail system in place and he sold them on the idea of having an orienteering map made and getting some classes up and running.

Rick DeWitt did all the work on the map and Pavlina Brautigam was lined up to teach the first set of classes. These were part of the college's continuing education program, held in the evening, with the final class at one of WCOC's local meets.

Shortly after Pavlina's programs got rolling, Don and I met with the coordinator of the Kids on Campus program and a new summer program was underway.

Kids on Campus

Sue Worthington and I have taught this two week class for the past two summers. Last year, we had only an afternoon ses-

sion with children going into grades 4 through 6.

This summer interest mounted. We were fortunate enough to be able to add a morning session for students going into grades 7 through 10. Class size was perfect. There were ten students and two teachers, plus Sue's 2-year-old daughter, Kelly.

Most Kids on Campus classes have just one teacher, but I made it quite clear that if we were going to bring 10 students into the woods we would need two people. Fine, they were just glad to have orienteering added to their schedule. Yeah!!

Sue and I are former teachers; we had the "teacher" stuff under control. For instance, we knew that we would have to write any directions on the board for students who are visual learners, rather than just tell the students what to do.

A good example of this came on day one when we told them what they should have in their backpacks to bring into the woods. Many of the kids forgot half of what we told them to bring!

After sitting down with some great training books and games (see sidebar) and going over all the training events we had been through over the years, we were ready for the little buggers.

Our lesson plans split each of the 10 days into classroom and woods activities. We had lesson plans ready for thunderstorm days, just in case. But the kids knew that, unless it was a monsoon out there, they should plan to head up into the woods. Fortunately, we never had to enforce this rule—it has not rained on Kids On Campus orienteers yet.

By utilizing two teachers, one of us could hang flags while the other prepared the students for the day's activity such as planning all their routes or creating their clue sheets and packing their backpacks. In the woods, one teacher could stay at the start/finish while the other teacher could roam the woods coaching "lost" students.

Students' skills varied widely

Team teaching also allowed us the flexibility to create courses of varying difficulty for each pair of students or individual student as their confidence in the woods increased.



In the older class this year were two boy scouts hoping to gain their orienteering merit badge. Most however did not know what orienteering was. They just wanted to be outside.

It was learning experience for most kids to be challenged either mentally, physically and for some kids both. For others it was their first time in a strange woods by themselves. Everyone gained confidence even if they didn't learn all the skills we were teaching.

Parents were invited the last day of class to learn about what the students had accomplished. The kids lead their parent on the course and then were given a copy of the local schedule. We hope to see them at a meet soon.

If you would like lesson plans and details on any of the exercises, please send me an e-mail at donnabf@aol.com. ▲

Materials we used

These items are available from the Orienteering suppliers as are many other items you might find useful.

Be Expert with Map and Compass

Bjorn Kjellstrom
ISBN 0-684-14270-8

Teaching Orienteering

Carol McNeill
ISBN 0-88011-804-0

Lesson Plans—Orienteering

Orienteering Service of Australia
ISBN 0-9593976-2-0

Orienteering And Map Games for Teachers

Mary E. Garrett
United States Orienteering Federation

Play and Learn Orienteering

O-Game
Similar to the bingo principle
Rebard O-Kartservice a/s

