

ELM FORK EDUCATION CENTER GUIDE PROGRAM

The University of North Texas Elm Fork Education Center works closely with school districts to provide a science-based field trip for students kindergarten through fifth grade. Children have age-specific lessons in archeology and aquatics, they visit the planetarium and the exhibit hall, and they learn the natural history of animals native to Texas. The Center provides this experience to 20,000 children a year.

Master Naturalists volunteer to act as Guides, leading groups of 15-20 children and their adult chaperones between activities conducted in and around the Environmental Sciences Building on the UNT campus. Free parking is provided. The staff and instructors are excellent and very friendly.

Guides do not have any teaching responsibilities and can choose how much interaction they have with the children. There are opportunities for Guides to have short discussions with children about environmental or general science subjects, but only if the Guide is comfortable doing so. Teachers remain responsible for supervision of the children.

Guides meet their group of children at 9:30 a.m., give a brief introduction and lead the group to their first activity. Every 30-45 minutes, the group is guided to their next activity. Guides are free to visit or read in the lounge while waiting for their group, or they may stay with the children during their activities. The field trip ends at 1:30 P.M.

Most Guides volunteer to serve one day a week, with some helping out every other week. Although the staff depends heavily on volunteer help, they are very understanding when a volunteer cannot come in due to other obligations or has to arrive late or leave early. Because there are only two non-teaching staff members, the need for volunteer Guides is always acute and we are treated very well.

There are children in attendance almost every weekday throughout the school year. The Christmas/New Year holiday conforms to the UNT schedule and is usually three weeks long.

This is a fun opportunity for Master Naturalists who like to interact with children or those who want a structured environment without heavy physical demands.

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