

Leveling Up and Incentives: Guide

1. **BLOG POSTS:** The ultimate goal here is to have your blog post on the High Trails website.
 - A. **Read:** check out what has already been written on the specific questions; class content, media review, trip review, etc. Find several good examples on the website to use as a general expectation basis.
 - B. **Choose A Topic:**
 - i. Pick something that interests you and that you can write about passionately.
 - ii. Talk to the Program Director and get your topic approved; we want a wide variety of in depth topics related to outdoor education and our natural area. Do not proceed with writing until your topic has been approved. **Note:** *once your Blog Post Topic is approved, you have one (1) month to complete it. After this, if you're not finished, your topic and work becomes fair game and someone else can take it over. This keeps posts going and encourages you to quickly finish what you start.*
 - iii. Write 500 or more words, taking the time at the end to proof and back up your ideas and findings. Make your writing fun and interesting, and be sure to teach us something with specific examples.
 - iv. Back up your facts! Make sure to clearly cite your factual information.
 - v. Photos: make sure you have at least 5 (five) good pictures to include with your blog; each one should directly relate to what you are talking about and the photos should be **original and fun**. Most blog posts should have local pics, you can even be the star! *Your pictures should be submitted separately from the document as jpg attachments; do not put them into the blog post itself, as it makes editing photo images very difficult.*
 - C. **Turn It In:** pass it off to admin, dawn@dirtyclassroom.com, for proofing.
 - D. **Revise It:** very few blog posts do not have to be revised or edited. Be prepared to spend time revising your post based upon feedback. Bear in mind that not all blog posts will make it to the website; some are simply not good enough, even with revisions.
 - E. **Done:** the blog post is finished for level purposes once you are emailed with a "your blog post is finished" note. Print and attach this to your Level Request Form.
 - F. **Talk:** When it's finally on the website, talk about your post at a staff meeting.
2. **BOOK CLUB:** The Book Club is a program meant to enhance your knowledge through reading and discussions of topics with your peers. Books located in the library are pre-approved (other than story books), and choices outside of the library must be approved by the PC. Once you have chosen which book you will focus on, select one to three other instructors who can participate in your Book Club. After the members of your Club have read a section of the book, you must all produce two questions and two pieces of interesting material to be discussed in a meeting which must last at least 30 minutes. Through your conversation with fellow instructors, determine how the information can be used in your classes or other program aspects. After each meeting, the "Book Club Leader" must send a short email to the PC outlining what was discussed, including the names of the members. To complete this program, all group members must invest 6-8 hours, which includes time used to read, and a total of 4 meetings. **Note:** *If only one or two copies of the book are available, feel free to plan out time before meetings where the book(s) can be passed around to the members of the group.*
3. **CLASSROOM OBSERVATION:** To observe a classroom, you've got to find a 5th or 6th grade classroom in the Southern California area (we have some connections...) and go see what actually happens when you have four walls surrounding you. When you have a plan, submit it in writing to the Program Director. Once approved, you've got to show up, volunteer your time, and get a signature from the supervisor verifying that you did what you said (see: Classroom Observation Form). Finally, write a blog post about your experience.
4. **DAYS:** Days come from Work Days + Environmental Days + Experience Days. Work Days worked are what you put on your timecard every week; if you work a double shift on a 4 day program, you will have worked eight days. Anytime you would like an update on your Work Days, please email the director. Environmental Days include what has been added through the Environmental Programs. You can get credit for days worked at a previous job (Experience Days); submit to your Program Coordinator an explanation of how your previous experience (kids, teaching, certifications, intangibles) allows you to step into our program needing less training and having more to offer both students and staff. See EXPERIENCE DAYS for more info. You are in charge of keeping track of all of your Environmental and Experience Days.
5. **EXPERIENCE DAYS:** Instructors earn days towards moving up levels by showcasing relevant prior experience in an essay. Use the following guidelines to award the appropriate amount of days to each staff member. Experience days combine with work days and environmental days to determine the "total days" an instructor has towards moving up levels.
 - A. Instructors: write a bullet-style list with a concise description and explanation of the experience and how it relates to one of the five categories of the rubric. Email to the PC who is in charge of the essays (shane@dirtyclassroom.com). Make sure to follow High Trails Document Standards (SW-Admin-Document Standards). If you have an experience that does not fit perfectly into one of the categories, please include it and it will be considered.
 - i. **Outdoor Education Experience:** time spent working in the field of outdoor education.
 - ii. **Education Experience:** advanced degrees earned, time spent teaching in the classroom and whether classroom time was science-oriented.
 - iii. **Kid Experience:** time spent coaching, working at camp, or working with kids out of the classroom.
 - iv. **Relevant Certifications:** advanced first aid certificates, other camp/outdoor science-related certificates.
 - v. **Intangibles:** not otherwise-specified skills and experience that prepares individuals to work at High Trails.
 - B. What happens once the program coordinator awards experience days?
 - i. The Program Coordinator emails a completed rubric with awarded days to the instructor and relevant site director.
 - ii. The Program Coordinator documents awarded days on appropriate spreadsheet.
 - C. How are days calculated?

- i. The rubric is weighted to award more days for more relevant experience. For example, teaching at another outdoor science school is more relevant to the instructor position at High Trails than having a life guarding credential.
 - ii. The rubric is designed to require investment in the High Trails experience before instructors “top out” and qualify for the highest level.
- D. Example
- i. *Outdoor Education Experience: Worked at CA Science School- Summer 2013*
 - (1) *Description:* Each day I hiked students around the Awesome National Forest and taught river ecology and flora/fauna of the area.
 - (2) *Explanation:* This is an outdoor education experience for 4th graders of Northern California.
6. **GENERAL INCENTIVES:**
- A. **Ace the Eval:** score above 4.5 on a full evaluation and get a \$50 gift certificate. All aces get recognition on Support Web. Program Director purchases gift cards over the phone (where applicable). Staff drive to the location to claim gift certificates with Photo ID. As of 2/1/15, gift certificates are available to:
 - i. **BodyTek Fitness:** Jonni: 909.903.3386
 - ii. **Chains Required Bike/Board Shop:** Jack: 909.878.3268
 - iii. **Dave’s Automotive Inc. Auto Repair and Tires:** 909.585.4436
 - iv. **Elevations Day Spa:** 909.866.7405
 - v. **Moonridge Coffee Company:** 909.281.5141
 - vi. **Maggio’s Pizza:** 909.866.8815
 - vii. **LeRoy’s Boardshop:** 909.866.4887
 - B. **Ironman:** if you work an entire season (fall or winter or spring) without missing a day, you will be placed in an all company (non-salaried employee) raffle for a \$200 gift certificate the last week of the season to REI or Amazon.
 - C. **Super Kudos:** is chosen by admin each week for an instructor who goes above and beyond in the course of duty. The person will be awarded a \$5 gift certificate (i.e. Get the Burger, Village Theaters, Amangela’s). Get chosen for 3 super kudos in a season (fall, winter, spring) and get a \$50 gift certificate.
 - D. **Instructor 42:** every six weeks, an employee at each site that goes above and beyond in their job will receive a \$50 gift certificate from one of the above locations and a paid Friday off. Eligible employees have instructor in their title (cabin instructor, field instructor, senior instructor). Fellow ‘instructors’ will vote on the winner. Voting will occur throughout the 6 weeks and each voting instructor receives only one ballot. To vote, fill out an Instructor 42 Voting Sheet.
 - E. **Carpooling/Recycling Drawings:** carpooling and recycling earn money towards a goal (see: Environmental Program Form); when the goal is met, four \$25 gift certificates to local businesses are drawn at a staff meeting (i.e. Get the Burger, Village Theaters, Amangela’s).
7. **GIFT CERTIFICATES:** Gift Certificates for leveling up are not redeemable for cash. Two choices are available: REI.com/Amazon.com
8. **GROWTH PLAN:** It's easy to dream. Making them happen takes a good amount of motivation, initiative, discipline, hard work, and follow through. Want some help? Everyone can use a little support from their friendly neighborhood Personal Trainer. The Growth Plan and Personal Trainer have their own separate document.
9. **HEALTH INSURANCE / HEALTH STIPEND:** Everyone starts out with a monthly health stipend that will increase as you move up levels. This is added to your paycheck as long as you show proof of your own health coverage. If you wish to enroll in the High Trails Health Insurance Plan, your benefits are a bit greater than the health stipend (for tax and incentive reasons...we want you to sign up for our plan). We initially pay 50% of your Health Insurance Cost (actual value depends on age and conditions).
10. **INSERVICE:** You must be Level One on the Teacher Path to teach an Inservice. As you plan out your Inservice, realize that you need to be organized and make the most of your time with the staff. Your inservice needs to last 30-45 minutes and the inservice must be taught at both sites (you can ask admin for help coordinating the teaching of the inservice. Email the Program Director with a proposal. Note: once your inservice is approved, you have one (1) month to complete it. After this, if you’re not finished, your inservice and work becomes fair game and someone else can take it over. This keeps good inservices going and encourages you to quickly finish what you start.
11. **INSERVICE EVALUATIONS:** Grab a Full Evaluation Form off the Admin Section of the Support Web. Watch any inservice and take any notes you may need to fill in the evaluation. Show some quality effort by typing it up, then meet with the presenter on your off time. Omit the Comments Section. From the evaluation, the instructor is the presenter and the students are the staff.
12. **NO LEVEL REQUESTS WITHIN THE LAST FOUR WEEKS OF YOUR JOB HERE:** this system is designed to motivate you as your tenure with us progresses; if you’re interested in levels, please don’t procrastinate.
13. **PEER EVALUATIONS:** As a great teacher, you’ve got to constantly push yourself to learn more games, tricks, techniques, and strategies. Otherwise you get stagnant, find yourself doing the same thing week after week, and you start to get tired and bored easily. Peer Evaluations make you get out and watch other people, allowing you the opportunity to learn from someone else.
- A. Ask permission. It’s always nice if you ask someone if they are comfortable with you coming out and watching them.
 - B. Valid Classes: Adventure Course, Earth Works, Environmental Awareness, Feathered Friends, Furry Friends, Little World, Native Culture, Nocturnal Nation, Orienteering, Outdoor Survival Hike, Plant Detectives, Team Discovery Hike, and Water Wonders. Each night of Astronomy counts for ½ of an evaluation due to the short length; you must watch both nights.
 - C. You can only watch each class once, and you can only watch each instructor twice. After everything, you can start over.
 - D. You must watch the entire class. Start at the beginning and leave at the end. Otherwise it does not count.

- E. You must discuss the evaluation with the instructor you observed within seven (7) calendar days, and have them sign the form.
- F. Peer Evaluations are valid for 12 calendar months.

14. **PROJECT:** Projects require a good amount of independent work and often require a certain level of skill in a particular area. Come up with something tangible and measurable that will benefit everyone. Once you've got an idea, or if you need an idea, contact the Director. With your Project, don't bite off too little or too much; if the project is small try to find something else to add on and make it worthwhile. If the project seems big you can talk with other instructors and work together. Projects should take around 8 hours to accomplish. The two biggest rules of Projects: Follow Through and Longevity. Fill out a Project Proposal and turn it in to the Site Director. Note: once your project is approved, you have one (1) month to complete it. After this, if you're not finished, your project and work becomes fair game and someone else can take it over. This keeps good projects going and encourages you to quickly finish what you start.
15. **REVISE LESSON PLAN:** Once you pass score a '4' or higher on a full evaluation, you begin to revise your own lesson plans. As you jump up more levels, you should be reworking all of your classes to make certain they fit you and your teaching style. Refer to Writing and Teaching Lesson Plans for what you can and cannot change. Stick to the format of the lesson plans. Check the staff library for books with new activities. Have fun and be creative. You must change at least one (1) activity. Then write up all of your lesson plans and turn them into the Program Coordinator. Keep in mind that we have to reserve the right to deny your new lesson plans if it does not meet current High Trails' standards. You don't need to revise adventure classes like orienteering, climbing, and archery because the material and delivery for these classes is relatively static.
16. **STEWARDSHIP:** To qualify for Stewardship, contact a local agency that aligns with the High Trails values of kids or nature. Find a time to volunteer, give back, and then have them sign the Stewardship Form. NOTE: there are two different types of Stewardship - Sponsored and UNSponsored. Sponsored Stewardships are the ones that High Trails supports and helps organize. While valuable, these are easier to accomplish because you don't have to do much legwork to get involved. UNSponsored Stewardship are the kind that you set up on your own; you look up an agency, you contact them, and High Trails doesn't really make your life any easier. All hours are based upon Sponsored Stewardship. If you want to get a little more bang for your time, UNSponsored Stewardships count as Double. For example, if you volunteer at North Shore Elementary for their Halloween Carnival, this is a High Trails Sponsored Stewardship, and 4 hours is 4 hours. If you contact the Discovery Center and do the coordination with them for an UNSponsored activity, you get double the hours: 4 hours is 8 hours. Whoa.

17. **TIME FRAMES**

	Initial Response to Email	Follow Up
Blog Posts	48 (workday) hours	5 working days to review and return post to instructor for revisions
Experience Essays		5 working days to review
TFA Assignments		5 working days to assign
Growth Plan Meetings		Meeting scheduled with next 2 Admin work weeks of personal trainer
Level Requests		5 working days to review; effective as of date received if approved
Incentives		Received by Friday of following work week (within 10 working days)

18. **VIDEO EVALUATION:** When you get to this point, you MUST request the video camera, in writing submitted to the Program Coordinator, ONE WEEK in advance. You are responsible for finding someone to video your entire class (think of someone who needs to do peer evals). The same peer evaluation class validity rules apply, so you cannot have someone video you teaching snakes. Once your class is recorded, you've got to sit down, watch your class, and fill out a Full Evaluation Form on yourself.

High Trails Experience Essay Rubric

Category	Rate	Duration	Days
OE Experience	30 days per year teaching equivalent curriculum		
Education Experience	20 days per advanced degree earned, Masters and above		
	20 days per year taught in a classroom		
	5 days extra per year in science classroom		
Outdoor Experience	15 days per year spent guiding or in AmeriCorps-like program		
Kid Experience	10 days per year at residential camp		
	5 days per year spent babysitting, or summer at non-resident camp		
Certifications	10 days per advanced first aid certificate, WAFA or above		
	5 days per additional camp credential (eg: lifeguarding cert.)		
Intangibles	10 day flat rate for additional skills contributing to High Trails		
Total Days Awarded:			

Instructor 42 Vote

Vote for an *instructor* who, you feel, has gone above and beyond in the course of duty over the last 42 days.

WHO ARE YOU VOTING FOR:	DATE:
WHY ARE YOU VOTING FOR THEM?	YOUR NAME: