High Rocks Educational Corporation

*A Guide to High Rocks Camp: A Staff[[1]](#footnote-1) Reference*

Table of Contents:

Introduction: The spirit of camp; the two different camps………………………….……..2

General tips and best practices……………………………………………………….……2

Behaviors that could result in termination of employment………………………….…… 3

Behaviors to limit/avoid……………………………………………………………….…..4

Schedule and bells…………………………………………………………………….…...4

Campground maintenance and set-up………………………………………………….….5

First day of camp…………………………………………………………………….…….5

Meals………………………………………………………………………………….…...7

Tracks………………………………………………………………………………….…..8

Girls Group………………………………………………………………………………...8

Pods…………………………………………………………………………………….….8

Gratefuls…………………………………………………………………………………...8

Solo time……………………………………………………………………………….….9

Jobs…………………………………………………………………………………..…….9

Fun Time…………………………………………………………………………….…….9

Music……………………………………………………………………………….…….10

Pictures…………………………………………………………………………….……..10

Campfire……………………………………………………………………………….…10

Tuck-ins………………………………………………………………………………..….11

“On call” and night-time activity…………………………………………………............11

Private camp spaces………………………………………………………………….…...12

Medicine & First aid……………………………………………………………….….….12

Homesickness……………………………………………………………………………..13

Phones………………………………………………………………………………….....15

Emergency plan & Chain of decision-making command…………………..………….…15

Confidentiality & Mandatory reporting………………………………………………..…17

Staff communication at camp………………………………………………………….…18

Power struggles & Staff conflict…………………………………………………………18

When You’re “On”: Campground mode & Personal wellness………………………..…19

Use of the lodge……………………………………………………………………….….19

Last day of camp……………………………………………………………………….…20

Best practices specific to New Beginnings camp………………………………………...22

Junior Counselors…………………………………………………………….….22

Hike Day………………………………………………………………………....23

The Pledge……………………………………………………………………….25

Best practices specific to Camp Steele…………………………………………………...25

Academic preparation…………………………………………………………....25

Float Day/Fun Day………………………………………………………………25

Starlight overnight……………………………………………………………….26

List of traditions…………………………………………………………………………..27

Introduction

The High Rocks campground is a magical and sacred space. Many girls feel that they can be their best and truest selves when at camp, and we as staff want to do everything in our power to encourage and cultivate this sense of pride in the transformational power of camp. We are role models for how the girls will interact with the physical space of camp and with each other.

New Beginnings camp (NB) introduces new girls to High Rocks and to being a part of the High Rocks family for the first time, and also emphasizes self-discovery and exploration. NB gives girls a chance to escape from the stressors and expectations of their everyday lives, discover their own strengths, and confront their weaknesses. NB lays the groundwork of creating a support system for years to come and will profoundly shape new girls’ involvement with High Rocks in the future, so it is of the utmost importance that incoming girls have the absolute best experience possible. NB also utilizes the wisdom and experience of older girls who have proven themselves to be effective leaders, by allowing these girls to apply for the paid position of being a Junior Counselor (JC). Selected JCs live in the JC screenhouse, provide mentoring and model what it means to be a High Rocks girl, build their capacity as High Rocks leaders, and take part in an intensive college level academic seminar separate from the rest of the girls.

Camp Steele (CS) is an opportunity for girls to be reunited with their High Rocks family, and delve more deeply into the questions, experiences, and challenges brought to the surface in NB. Girls have said that CS reminds them of their High Rocks selves, and what it feels like to live without the distractions and stressors of work, family, and school. CS also allows them to reconnect with this community that does not judge them for their life choices or goals. CS also allows girls the opportunity to step up and take on additional responsibilities for running camp (through their jobs) and for their own learning and growth through more content-based and more academically rigorous classes. Thus Camp Steele has the dual and sometimes conflicting responsibility of being challenging and growth-producing for girls, and being fantastically fun and rejuvenating. Finally, CS invites older girls from other youth organizations across the region and the country to come to camp, adding additional diversity and new perspectives on learning and cross-cultural dialogue.

General tips and best practices

* **Be aware of where the girls are in the campground/picnic shelter/camp space at all times.** Every interaction with girls counts – driving them in the vans, walking with them from place to place, standing in line at meal times are great opportunities to connect with girls, learn more about them, laugh with them and help them feel at home. Girls are always observing you and taking cues from you.
* **Be friendly and curious with all girls.** Try and balance building relationships with specific girls with trying to build some kind of relationship with each and every girl. The goal is not to make specific girls feel connected to you, but to make all the girls feel connected to the broader High Rocks family. Try to switch up who you eat with, talk to at fun time, etc.
* **Learn how to change the subject without just changing the subject.** To steer a conversation among girls away from a topic you feel is problematic, alienating, or inappropriate for camp space, it is often helpful to divert the conversation to something more in keeping with HR’s values of fun, adventure, and academic curiosity. If a girl shares something of a highly personal or concerning nature, it may be more appropriate to divert the public conversation, and then follow up with the girl later to discuss her comments privately. Diffuse, deflect, divert. (See BAG OF TRICKS)
* **Carry a watch!** Camp operates on a tight schedule. It’s very helpful if staff people are all on time and are letting the girls out of their classes/tracks on time.
* **Carry a flashlight at all times after dark**. You never know when you might have to walk a girl somewhere, get a last minute campfire prop, etc.
* **Take advantage of the time spent moving through the campground.** Offering to walk a girl somewhere (to the bathroom, to her track, laps around the campground) can be an effective way to capitalize on these passing times to bond with girls or work through a problem without taking girls away from track time or other scheduled time.
* **Be willing to pitch in for any activity at any moment.** In short, be flexible! Camp is a fluid environment that requires us all to be adaptable. Even if you are not scheduled for a specific task or duty, if you see that an area/task is shorthanded, be willing to help. If you are ever unsure where to be helpful, go to the kitchen/wellness staff and ask if they need help.
* **Keep the magic in your heart, and know when to take a break.** Camp is the heart of the High Rocks program, and the girls are the heart of camp. If you’re having trouble feeling/creating the magic or are in a place of exhaustion or negativity, it may be time for you to take a wellness break (see Wellness).

Behaviors that could result in termination of employment

* Use of illegal drugs
* Smoking on High Rocks property
* Engaging in a romantic/intimate relationship with a High Rocks girl (JC or camper)
* Engaging in a romantic/intimate relationship with a member of the High Rocks staff (including interns) without the pre-knowledge and working out of a plan with your supervisor.
* A mental health concern or issue of such magnitude that it interferes with your ability to be a contributing member of the camp community, including but not limited to: a severe eating disorder, depression, insomnia, or recent personal loss. We understand that life is complex and issues arise and any decision will be made on a case by case basis in consultation with the camp Master Counselor, Master Teacher, and the Executive Director. This provision is less punitive than it is for the greater good of all involved. Taking space to get yourself help is in your long-term best interest and in the interest of the camp community that cares for you.
* Please review your personnel policy for any further clarification.

Behaviors to avoid

* Swearing
* Talking about your own dating/romantic life or use of drugs/alcohol/cigarettes
* Gossiping, especially about other staff or girls present at camp
* Using electronic devices. Part of camp’s appeal and magic is its rustic character. Try to leave your devices at home; we ask the girls to do the same.
* Talking at length about leaving camp or nights off. Girls may notice staff absences and ask questions which can be answered honestly and directly, but try to keep the focus and enthusiasm on camp. Be sensitive to the fact that girls don’t get to leave. Try to go in and out of camp discreetly. Park cars at the lodge, and avoid driving them up to the campground unless necessary. Avoid when possible driving cars up to the campground after dark or playing music in a car you’re driving in the campground (unless it’s post New Beginnings hike or fun/float day with girls)
* Public displays of affection in staff-staff intimate relationships. We ask the girls to preserve camp as a sex-free zone, we do the same. (See the guide to same sex relationships at camp for further questions about intimate relationships between girls at camp)
* Having overnight guests at camp, especially those with whom you are involved in an intimate relationship. A staff member may sleep in a private space at camp with his/her romantic partner only for the purposes of sharing childcare, in which case a tent can be pitched in an out of the way location such as the knoll.

Schedule and bells

Camp runs on a tight schedule that is largely the same every day except for the first and last days of camp and “special” days (Hike Day for NB; Starlight Overnight for CS). The exact schedule of time blocks will change from year to year. Each day consists of a combination of time spent in Tracks, Girls Group, Solo Time, Fun Time, Jobs, and meals. The start and end of each time block is indicated by ringing the bell located next to the picnic shelter, with ten minutes of passing time between the ending bell of one activity and the starting bell of another. The camp Assistant Director is in charge of making sure the bell is rung on time, but may delegate this duty to kitchen staff or her intern. When the Assistant Director is not present (mainly in the morning hours) the Executive Chef will be in charge of bell ringing. If you notice that the bell has not been rung at a time when it should have been rung, check with the camp Assistant Director or Executive Chef, then ring the bell as necessary.

Campground maintenance and set-up

It is important to set an example of how the campground should be treated. Respect the campground, keep it clean, avoid littering. Space is limited in the campground and one classroom space will often be used for several purposes. Any tools, props, or items used during a class should be put back in their proper places when they are no longer needed so that any space is ready for the next activity. Try to avoid leaving excessive personal belongings around the picnic shelter.

The picnic shelter functions as the headquarters of camp, including the campground office of the camp Assistant Director. Staff meetings will often take place there, important announcements posted there. Head there in case of an emergency, as there will likely be an available adult there, and there is a working phone located there.

In the picnic shelter, there should also be labeled boxes for both incoming and outgoing mail so that girls may send and receive letters from their families and friends. The Assistant Director will distribute letters from home to the appropriate girls.

First day of camp

The first day of camp will be slightly different from year to year depending on the tastes and personality of the Master Teacher who will plan the specifics, but the goals and general progression of events are as follows:

Staff are on hand early in the morning to prep the campground, organize supplies, get oriented to the schedule, take their stations on the road to direct traffic, etc. Parents will drive girls up to the campground, where staff will greet them and direct them to the picnic shelter where they will sign in, receive their pod assignments (and track assignments if CS) as well as their binders, shoulder bags, and water bottles. Supplies will be on hand to label these items with the girls’ names. Any outstanding medical form issues will also be addressed at sign in. Staff (or JCs if NB) will then help girls and families to move into their pods.

Girls will arrive at different points during the morning, and there will likely be a lot of waiting around. It’s important that all staff be “on” and engaged with girls and their families during this time. For many girls and parents, this is the first time they are encountering High Rocks and the campground, and it’s essential that parents leave with a good impression, and that girls feel immediately welcomed. Be friendly, be curious. Ask parents questions about where they live, work, how they feel about their daughters being away from home, etc. Give them a tour of the campground, tell them about the history of High Rocks, etc. For returning girls and parents, we want them to feel that returning to camp is like a homecoming. Show them some love!

At a set time, by which hopefully most or all girls have arrived, the majority of the staff will progress into the field with the girls to play some sort of “get to know you” name game. Sometimes, there will also be a discussion of “who owns the High Rocks” or the money necessary to put on camp, so that girls can begin to feel ownership over the camp and understand its financial operation in a better and more concrete way.

At the same time as the girls are in the field, designated veteran and/or year-round staff, usually including the Executive Director or at least one of the camp Co-Directors (Master Teacher or Master Counselor) will assemble the parents present, usually by the campfire ring or in the picnic shelter for a parent meeting. At NB, this largely consists of assuaging parents’ fears and worries, as well as clarifying what actually goes on at camp. At CS, this is usually more of an explanation of High Rocks as a five year comprehensive scholarship program that demonstrates to parents the potential benefits and advantages of their girl sticking with the program. A nice activity to do in any parent meeting, is to go around and ask each parent/family member to say one thing they hope their girl will gain/achieve during camp. The goal of these meetings is to have every parent leave the campground feeling confident in the program and safe, excited, and proud of their daughter’s participation. We should always be striving to develop family investment in High Rocks.

After the conclusion of the parent meeting, we encourage parents to slip out discreetly so as not to create a long goodbye process that could make it more difficult for parents and girls to say goodbye. Some parents will go over to the field and say quick goodbyes to their girls.

Usually the girl games in the field will still be going on when the parents are leaving. Facilitators of these girl games will often do an additional activity where they split up the girls by pod and ask them to prepare some sort of pod dance/skit that requires participation from every girl. Often these skits will be framed as a kind of competition, which the kitchen staff will then judge, the prize for which will be going first at lunch. Usually this activity leads right into lunch, where the girls will be asked to sit with their pod to encourage further pod bonding and give all girls an automatic social group. Staff energy is especially important in this first lunch.

After lunch, generally girls go either to abbreviated versions of their classes (NB), tracks (CS) and Girls Group (both). There may also be an additional notebook collaging activity depending on the schedule. Dinner will be at approximately the normal time, followed by Jobs and Fun Time (time permitting) and campfire. Especially at NB, the first day is critical in ensuring girls will stay at camp. Being in a new place can be extremely challenging for girls, and the first day will often see many girls experiencing homesickness (see Homesickness).

For further details on the first day of camp, also see the First Day of Camp Curriculum.

Meals

There are three meals a day; breakfast, lunch, and dinner (there is usually often a mid-morning and mid-afternoon snack). Breakfast is a more casual meal where girls eat as they wake up. Dinner features Gratefuls (see below). Before lunch and dinner (following Gratefuls for dinner only) there is the opportunity for staff and girls to make logistical announcements. Kitchen crew will then make meal announcements explaining the meal.

Meals are in many ways the backbone of the camp day schedule. They are some of the only times where all staff and girls are together in the same space. They are very useful for checking in to make sure girls are doing OK. If girls are skipping meals or eating inadequately this can be a major issue, not only because it may indicate a larger eating disorder or problem, but also because girls become tired, cranky, and unable to fully participate in camp if they are not properly nourished.

Many girls who attend camp are used to eating very different food than the kinds of food High Rocks offers, and may need a significant amount of support to eat camp food. Many instances of girls not eating can be attributed to these differences. Girls may also find eating camp food significantly changes the way their bodies feel – they may feel significant differences in their digestion, weight, and energy levels. The camp schedule may also be challenging for many girls who are not used to getting up early, or eating three regular meals a day. Encourage the girls to eat something at every meal. Skipping breakfast leaves girls tired and unfocused. It can be a tricky line to walk between being pushy and being encouraging, and food is especially sensitive. Modeling healthy eating behavior, including being an adventurous eater yourself, are some of the best ways. Be able to describe foods to girls, offer them tastes from your plate, joke with them about their pickiness, prepare for a girl a small bit of a new food combined with a familiar food, etc. Anything you can do to make the eating environment feel fun, stress-free, and exciting.

Meal times are also particularly sensitive because they are some of the only un-scheduled times during the day. Especially during New Beginnings camp, be on the lookout at meals for clique dynamics forming or for girls who seem lost or unsure who to sit with.

Homesickness also surfaces often at mealtimes because they are unstructured times, and meals can seem foreign (as above). Staff energy must be extra strong. Unless you are designated as being “off” at a certain meal, you are always “on” at meal time, so give 100%. Get a sense of the distribution of staff at different tables, and sit with a table of girls that does not already have a staff person or several staff people. Avoid sitting with fellow staff at meal times unless you have no other time to connect with that staff and need to have a meeting or work session. Meals are the primary moments for getting to know girls and modeling High Rocks values.

Tracks

These are the content-based learning classes that girls take. At NB, there are always four tracks, also called “classes” (horses, math, creative expressions, and science) and all girls rotate through all of them. At CS, the tracks are different each year based on the expertise of available staff and girl interest, and girls sign up for one particular class track that they take for the majority of each day and for the entirety of camp.

Girls Group

A facilitated space where girls can discuss important issues in their lives with other girls and not have to worry about being judged for what they say.  This is a sacred space for girls to speak to each other on a peer to peer level. This is also a space to process unexpected events that may arise at camp that require group processing. It is where the girls get to know each other on a more personal level, share their sometimes diverse ideas on controversial topics, and build relationships that will go beyond camp. In many ways, Girls Group is the heart of camp, allowing the girls to really come together as a bonded sisterhood and learn the meaning of the High Rocks core beliefs of non-judgment, support, and a High Rocks self. To protect the confidentiality and seal of trust that is built within the Girls Group space, the only staff that participate in Girls Group are the Girls Group leaders, unless the girls or Girls Group leaders specifically invite additional staff.

Pods

This is the name given to the groups in which girls are placed for living and sleeping. It refers both to the physical space of the shelter that contains that group of girls, and also as a term to reinforce the group bond between those girls. Pods are carefully constructed to create diverse mixes of girls from different counties and friend groups, and may be used as tools to easily separate girls for activity purposes. All staff people are assigned a pod that will remain the same throughout camp. It’s encouraged to keep a special look out for your pod-lets, know generally how they are doing at camp, and make the pod feel as comfy and home-like as possible. If you are a Pod Mama, this is a large portion of your job.

Gratefuls

Each night just before eating dinner, all girls and available staff assemble at the first dinner bell in the picnic shelter. Two girls “lead” Gratefuls by standing at the front of the picnic shelter and calling on staff and girls who indicate they’d like to make a Grateful by raising their hand. Gratefuls are a long-standing tradition at High Rocks camp, that represent our commitment to thinking about others and expressing gratitude. They begin, “I’m grateful for…” Any staff or girl can say a Grateful about anything, though they often tend to be about specific people at camp or elements of camp. It is often useful to say Gratefuls for girls who are struggling at camp or having behavioral issues, but all girls like to get Gratefuls because it makes them feel singled out and special. It is important for staff to be grateful for other staff, as well, but try to limit staff-to-staff Gratefuls and really focus on giving girls the extra special attention.

Typically, the evening after the Hike during NB camp and also on the last night of each camp, Gratefuls can be very long. JCs and the oldest girls should be keeping an eye out for excessive Gratefuls or Gratefuls that depart from the spirit of the tradition (inside jokes, etc).

Hammock Time

A time for girls to focus on writing about their experience of camp. In the past Solo Time was alone time where girls chose a particular spot in the woods to return to each day and journal. The girls themselves came up with the idea changing Solo Time to Hammock Time in 2012. Hammock Time remains a silent space for personal reflection, rest, and contemplation. Hammock Time facilitators will also be focused on writing coaching and feedback as an essential component of helping the girls reach the core competency of being strong writers if girls need it, and providing journal prompts for girls who are stuck. Girls are expected to spend at least 15 minutes writing in their journals, after which they can read, nap, write letters home, or draw. In the event of rain, Hammock Time is held in the girls shelters, in their beds. Girls’ Hammock Time is an hour of silence in the campground.

There is also Hammock Time scheduled for JC’s, interns, and wellness team. During adult Hammock Time, you are expected to spend the first 15 minutes of your Hammock Time journaling. Please be pro-active about being on time for Hammock Time and bringing others with you.

Jobs

There are many tasks that must be done daily to keep the campground clean and running smoothly, the most salient of which are:

* kitchen (dishes & clean up)
* outhouse cleaning & re-stocking
* campfire building
* putting out & collecting lanterns
* taking care of the gardens
* trash & compost

The girls are in charge of doing these jobs (led by the JCs at NB). This is to teach and practice respect, responsibility, and ownership over their High Rocks experience and the physical space of camp. It is also important that we give girls good work skills for other jobs and the understanding that their labor is helping cover the cost of them being at camp. By doing these jobs, the girls are effectively buying part of their food and helping pay their own tuition.

During this time, the girls group staff will be on hand to make sure the jobs are getting done and that morale is high. It helps to sing songs, crack jokes, do anything possible to keep the girls motivated to do their jobs and feel proud of their contribution to camp.

There is another set of jobs that the interns take care of in the evenings (lodge kitchen, trash runs, etc.)

Fun Time

An unstructured time where the girls can relax, take showers, take space from the camp community, or participate in a fun activity. Fun time’s exact time in the schedule may change from year to year, but it is generally in the evening after dinner. The Senior Counselors will offer several different optional fun activities. These may be announced at dinner announcements or written on a white board in the picnic shelter with a description of the activity and a place to meet. It is good to have a variety of several different activities being offered, including one that contains an element of movement or exercise (walk to the waterfall, ultimate Frisbee, etc). These activities are totally optional, and girls may choose instead to hang in the hammocks, write letters home, or take a shower, but it is important to offer planned activities so that all girls always have an option of something fun and inclusive to do.

Music

Historically, no recorded/electronic music was allowed in the High Rocks campground, in order to encourage girls and staff to use their own voices and acoustic instruments to create entertainment. However, it has been found that having music in limited amounts is a big morale booster for girls as well as for kitchen staff. The use of music and the choosing of music is at the discretion of the kitchen staff and the camp Assistant Director. Don’t put on music without checking in with the kitchen staff first. It’s become a kind of tradition for the girls on kitchen crew to pick and play songs to make that job more fun, and to have a sort of dance party after the dinner following Hike Day in NB camp. Use common sense and your best judgment. If a girl puts on a super inappropriate song, veto it. If you have a question about music choices or music playing in general, check in with kitchen staff, camp Assistant Director, or any other veteran staff.

Pictures

It is very helpful for someone to be taking pictures throughout both camps, as these pictures not only help us to document the experience of camp, but are also used for two essential purposes:

* to create remembrance gifts for each NB girl (a picture of the girl with “because” reasons that she has become a High Rocks girl that are written by staff) as well as “graduation” gifts for the rising college freshmen (photo collages of their time at High Rocks)
* for grant applications, donor thank you letters, etc.

Campfire

At the end of the day it is important that everyone come together as a group. Campfire is a time when a lot of the group bonding will take place, and an important time for girls to wind down and reflect on the events and thoughts of the day.  One of the most important parts of campfire is that girls (and staff) are given the opportunity to share their thoughts, feelings, and writing from that day. Many of the most important traditions of the High Rocks, including the High Rocks songs, are taught and passed down at campfire (see List of Traditions).

One staff person from the Girls Group team will lead campfire each night. The leader decides which songs to teach, what games to play, asks for girls to read their words, and generally facilitates campfire. It is important however, that all staff who are at campfire, be “on” – modeling engaged participation (singing, clapping, making animal paws etc.), being aware and sensitive to the well-being of the girls around you, helping girls to learn the words of songs if they don’t know them, sitting with girls instead of in a clump of staff, or even inserting yourself in the middle of a clique/friend group.

Tuck-ins

Tuck-ins is the process of settling girls into their beds and getting them ready to go to sleep. It is essential that all pods get tucked in, because not only is it a sweet tradition that offers extra special bonding time between girls and staff, but bedtime can also be a very scary and hard time for girls. Many girls are not used to sleeping in the woods and the sounds of the woods are disconcerting. Additionally, homesickness tends to surface at bedtime (see Homesickness).

Furthermore, nighttime is prime time for girl naughtiness and talking about naughtiness. Girls from different backgrounds, social groups, and levels of emotional and sexual maturity will often be in pods together. Staff presence is important to set the tone of night behavior as one of fun and relaxation and troubleshoot any possible hard girl dynamics. It’s fine to tell jokes and be silly with your pod, but try to leave your podlets relaxed and sleepy, instead of loud and riled up. Girls have been known to stay up late, and tired girls make grumpy, slow learners.

If you are having an issue in your pod that concerns one of the points above, be sure to tell the Master Counselor so that she can be aware of what is going on and determine what steps, if any, need to be taken to resolve it.

The girls group team is in charge of making the tuck-in plan each night. After campfire, staff that are Pod Mamas (and not “off”), on call, or opting in to offer additional support will sleep at the campground in their assigned shelters. If it is the Pod Mama’s night off, they will arrange the plan before they leave the campground. Interns are invited to do tuck-ins but not required. Pod Mamas will check in with the staff that are assigned to their pod and make sure the pod is covered, but not overwhelmed with too many staff.

Generally, allow the girls a few minutes to change and brush their teeth in privacy, then join the pod. Some suggestions for things to do with your pods before bed time are:

* talking/reflecting on the day
* telling stories/telling group stories (everyone contributes one word, the story circles around the pod)
* reading stories out loud to the pod (the camp Assistant Director shall arrange for a selection of kids, young adult and adult books to be brought up from the library and will be kept in a corner of the aviary for the duration of camp, or you can bring your own). It can be especially fun to pick a long story or novel to read pieces of every night, as this helps the girls stay engaged in the pod and the story over the course of camp.

“On call” and night-time activity

The one staff member and one intern are on call each night. They are responsible for monitoring the campground after campfire, and for the well-being of everyone that stays overnight. They keep tabs on noise level, girls sneaking out of their pods, etc., and make the final calls on any issues or problems that arise. They sleep in the shelter by the picnic shelter, so that they are easy for the girls to find if they need someone.

Ideally, between the two people on call, a staff person will make a walking round of the campground every half hour from lights out until everyone settles down. If, after that time, they hear a disturbance, they should also go investigate and deal with it appropriately. They are not police, but they do make sure that the girls are in their appropriate pods with the lights out and not being overly noisy. They encourage girls they find awake late at night to go to sleep, but ultimately girls will learn by experience that if they stay up super late talking, their bodies will suffer the consequences the next day. They may also have to deal with bug or animal issues, sit with girls, and re-settle them in for bedtime.

It’s important that staff also be very cognizant of their own noise level, as we are setting the example for the girls. If you are going to move through the campground after lights out, walk quietly and efficiently. Try not to gather in groups and talk in the campground after lights out.

Staff unwinding and end of the night socializing has traditionally taken place in the staff screen house.

Private Camp Spaces

The JC screen house is a safe haven for the JCs; a place where they can bond as a group, unwind, or work on class work. Usually staff do not go there unless they are specifically invited.

Similarly, the staff screenhouse and bungalow serve the same purpose. Typically, the girls putting out lanterns leave the lanterns a good distance away from staff sleeping quarters, and the JCs do not wake up staff. You are responsible for setting your own alarm clock.

Medicine & First Aid

This section is intended to provide a basic outline of the policies associated with medicine and first aid at camp. However, these policies are subject to change depending on the specific needs of the girls attending and the staff that are coordinating a particular camp. Be sure to clarify the medicine and first aid protocol at the staff day before each camp.

**A comprehensive first aid kit is located in the picnic shelter, the horse arena, and the lodge. These first aid kits should never be moved out of their designated locations.** First aid kits are also located in the red and green vans, as well as the Honda civic hybrid and can be used on CS Fun Day, or any other activity that takes place outside of the campground.

First Aid guidelines:

* Familiarize yourself with what is in the first aid kit.
* Know who on the camp ground is first aid certified, and who is in charge of handling medical emergencies.
* Alert one of the camp Co-Directors (Master Counselor or Master Teacher) if there is a medical emergency. If you are unable to do so because the situation requires you to stay put, arrange for someone else to communicate your situation to a Co-Director immediately. If neither of the camp Co-Directors are available, alert the camp Assistant Director.
* Medical forms for every girl are located in a binder in the picnic shelter. Unless it is a life-threatening, time-sensitive emergency you should consult that individual’s medical form before making any treatment decisions; even if you are first-aid certified.
* If you do have to take a girl (or anyone under 18) to a hospital, you **must** take the girl’s medical form with you to the hospital, otherwise the hospital cannot admit the girl. As a back up, there are also binders of all girl medical forms located in the red and green vans as well as the Honda civic hybrid.
* (Also see Emergency Plan for further details on medical emergencies)

Medicine Guidelines:

* Girls often come to camp with prescription medication that they need to take daily. On the first day of camp, all prescription medications are collected from parents/guardians by a designated staff member. That staff member will confirm with the parent or guardian the dosage and any further instructions.
* Medicine lives in the picnic shelter. The designated staff member and/or kitchen staff are charged with administering prescription medication. Unless there is a life-threatening emergency, these staff members are the only ones who should ever dispense medicine.
* Ideally medicine is kept in a lock-box or locked cabinet; however, you should maintain awareness at all times for medicine that is not in its proper place, girls looking for medicine without the supervision of appropriate staff, etc.
* No JCs, no one under the age of 18, should have access to these kits without supervision.
* The bulk OTC medications (benadryl, ibuprofen, aspirin, midol, etc) are kept in the Lodge first aid kit.  Smaller doses (no more than 5 pills of each medicine) should be distributed to all the other kits, and if a kit run low, staff members can come down and refill them.  The lodge is the most secure location, and it is best to limit the amount of medication/pills that we have distributed.
* If a girl asks for non-prescription medicine such as Tylenol, Midol, etc., you can give that girl medicine from the first-aid kit if their medical form says that you have permission to do so.

Homesickness

For many girls, High Rocks camp is the first time they have been away from their homes and families for any significant period of time. Homesickness is primarily an issue for girls at NB camp, but it can also be very strong in girls new to CS, and even occasionally in returning girls.

There are no hard and fast rules for how best to deal with homesickness. A variety of different approaches may prove equally effective.

Some veteran staff-suggested strategies for combating homesickness include:

* Listen – listen with empathy to the girl’s concerns about being at camp. Ask if there is anything you can do to make her experience of camp better. If there is a concrete problem that can be resolved, take concrete steps to resolve it.
* Distract – think of anything you can do to make that girl’s experience of camp extra fun. Create a new activity or fun treat that the girl just couldn’t stand to miss. Don’t ask about home or about if the girl is feeling homesick. Focus on what positive things are going on at camp.
* Avoid – sometimes a girl will single you out as the staff member to whom she has solely or primarily been voicing her homesickness. Without being unkind, you may try spending less time with her or being less present around mealtimes to stall for time and see if she might conquer the homesickness on her own.
* Assign a job – give the girl a specific role or task to do that appeals to something that interests her. Try to make her feel essential to the functioning of camp.
* Have her write a letter – sometimes the homesickness may be linked to a girls’ feelings of guilt or worry over being away from family, shirking family responsibility, or a family conflict. Encourage the girl to write a letter to whoever she misses most or with whom she wants most to communicate.

If a girl is so homesick she refuses to participate in camp and/or repeatedly asks to go home or talk to her family, go to the Master Counselor(MC) and explain the situation and the approaches you have already tried. At this point, the MC may contact the girl’s parents to let them know that she is struggling and to talk with them about why we believe it is beneficial for the girl to stay at camp. We try to avoid letting girls talk to their parents/guardians on the phone because it sometimes only makes them more homesick and determined to go home. If they are adamant about talking directly to their parent/guardian, the MC will arrange that. Depending on the parent/guardian, they may encourage the girl to stay, or they may be eager to come pick the girl up.

Sometimes, even despite our best and most ingenious tactics, a girl is simply not ready for the High Rocks experience. Additionally, sometimes a homesick girl is such a drain on staff energy and positive girl energy that it is the best course of action for the overall camp morale for the girl to leave camp.

In conversation with the girl’s family and the girl herself, the MC will make an action plan – strategies to support the girl to stay, or a pick-up plan so that the girl can leave camp discreetly with minimal disruption to the other campers. A staff person or JC from the leaving girl’s pod should help the girl pack up her belongings and bring them down to the lodge. The girl’s parent/guardian should pick her up at the lodge where the MC should meet the parents for a discussion about High Rocks year round programming and/or to offer general support and goodbyes.

After the girl is gone, the pods may need to be re-arranged to re-balance camper number distribution. The other girls will also certainly be asking questions about her departure and may need to process feelings of sadness and confusion. It’s best to be honest and constructive in your comments. A simple, “she had to go home,” or “it wasn’t her time to come to camp,” or “we’re excited for her to come back next year” can be effective.

Phones

There is a cordless phone available in the picnic shelter that the kitchen staff keeps with them at all times that is able to call both down to the lodge and out to the outside world. THERE MUST ALWAYS BE A PHONE IN THE CAMPGROUND KITCHEN. IF YOU TAKE THE PHONE, USE IT IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY OF THE KITCHEN AND THEN REPLACE IT ON THE CHARGER IMMEDIATELY. Try to limit your use of the phone as it breaks the spell of camp. If it becomes necessary for you to use the phone, do so discreetly and away from the girls.

Emergency plan and Chain of decision-making command

Situations arise at camp that are challenging, and may require a series of tough calls and consultation among staff. Emergencies are by nature unpredictable and call for fast thinking and adaptability. The following tips are meant as guiding principles and best practices, not hard and fast rules.

**General best practices for emergency situations**:

* The extended cab truck should remain in the campground for errands and emergencies. The kitchen team will also use it to transport food. Both vans will be parked at by the horse arena. Leave the keys in vehicles during the course of camp.
* Remain calm. Move through the campground efficiently. Avoid yelling, raising your voice, or generally creating alarm or panic in the girls unless absolutely necessary. Consult with other staff in person or over the phone discretely and away from the girls.
* Use the lodge as a private, separate from camp space. The lodge is a good place to call parents, consult with other staff, or hold an honor code violation hearing.
* When in doubt, over-communicate: it is essential that a camp Co-Director (Master Counselor or Master Teacher) or the Assistant Director be informed of any emergency situation so that they can give additional instructions to staff, manage girl energy, and respond to parent calls/inquiries.
* When in doubt, over-consult: it is always appropriate (unless a life-threatening situation requires immediate action) to consult more veteran staff members to help make a final call. It is the responsibility of the camp Co-Directors to be always on call during the course of camp. The High Rocks Executive Director is also an additional, last resource.
* Abide by the general chain of command when unsure how to act or if disagreements about a course of action arise. The camp Co-Directors are equally in charge of making final calls and are at the top of the chain of command. Followed by the camp Assistant Director (third in command). Followed by veteran staff (defined as any staff who has done two or more summers of camp or one summer and a full year of year-round programming) followed by newer staff (AmeriCorps members or any staff not meeting the guidelines for “veteran” staff) followed by interns, followed by JCs.

**In case of a medical emergency**, which includes, but is not limited to, deep cuts, falls, broken bones, sprains, head injuries, severe allergic reactions, seizures, asthma attacks, or difficulty breathing/shortness of breath over an extended period of time:

* Ensure that the scene of harm/injury is secure and that you will not put yourself in danger at the scene of harm/injury
* Determine as quickly as possible if the situation requires professional medical attention. When in doubt, opt for yes. Even if you have successfully applied a bandage to a deep cut, or administered an EpiPen, it is still a good idea to go to the hospital for follow-up treatment.
* Ensure that there is another person available to make emergency phone calls or retrieve first aid supplies, if necessary—it is best to have one person stay with the harmed/injured person and one or more people to take care of other tasks.
* Provide any basic first aid/triage you are equipped to offer. This includes applying a bandage and pressure to a bleeding wound, placing a hand or blanket under the head of a seizing person, elevating or icing a sprain, etc.
* In case of a severe allergic reaction in someone that carries an EpiPen, administer the EpiPen in their thigh.
* Make a transportation plan. **In case of possibility of head, neck, or back injury, do not move the injured person without the assistance of a stretcher and trained staff**. Avoid moving the injured person unless absolutely necessary. If possible, send one staff person to go get the van keys and the van and one staff person (or JC/oldest girl if no available staff person) to tell a Camp Co-Director (or camp Assistant Director if no available Co-Director) what has happened, where you are headed, and which van you are taking. Ideally, one staff person drives the van, while at least one other sits in the back of the van with the injured person to monitor her/his condition and provide comfort.
* Get to Pocahontas County Memorial Hospital as quickly as possible without driving in an unsafe manner.
* Communicate an update to a camp Co-Director or the camp Assistant Director as soon as you get one, and then at least hourly as the situation develops. This way, the Co-Directors and/or Assistant Director can communicate updates to the injured person’s parent/contact person and/or arrange for them to get to the hospital.

**In case of an honor code violation**, which includes, but is not limited to, girls smoking, girls stealing, girls having intimate/sexual relationships with other girls, ongoing instances of girls teasing/verbally torturing other girls, or any other behavior that is determined to be an honor code violation:

* Diffuse/disrupt the immediate situation at hand. This may include confiscating any contraband, physically isolating girls from the camp community or from one another, etc.
* Notify a camp Co-Director (Master Counselor or Master Teacher) as soon as possible. If one is not available, go down the chain of command to the most senior available person. Again, if it is necessary for you to stay put to monitor the scene, you may send another staff person to communicate what is going on.
* The camp Co-Directors will then begin the process of an honor code violation hearing. (See Honor Code Violation Process for more details)

**In case of an any other emergency**, which includes, but is not limited to, any action or situation that places the health, safety, or mental well-being of any girl in jeopardy, or the discovery of a staff person engaging in any of the behaviors listed under those that could result in termination of employment:

* Diffuse/disrupt the immediate situation at hand. This may include confiscating any contraband or dangerous/sharp objects, physically isolating girls or staff from the camp community or from one another, etc.
* Notify a camp Co-Director (Master Counselor or Master Teacher) as soon as possible. If one is not available, go down the chain of command to the most senior available person. The Executive Director will have to be involved in cases of staff misconduct.
* Make sure that all parties are safe while the camp co-directors/senior staff person works to resolve the issue. If the emergency situation occurs at night and concerns girls, make sure all girls feel safe and able to sleep through the night. It can be helpful to insert a staff member to physically sleep in a pod that is experiencing an unsafe or emergency situation to allow all girls to feel safe during the night.

Confidentiality

While at camp, girls may share things with you about their lives, and some of them may be of a sensitive nature. They may ask you to keep what they tell you confidential.

It is a constant balancing act of maintaining the bonds of trust girls build with staff and sharing information among the staff that allows all staff to better support a girl. We want to protect girls’ privacy and not create an atmosphere of gossiping about the girls’ lives, but our top priority is the girl’s safety and well-being. As a general rule, if a girl shares something with you that indicates that her well-being is in jeopardy, through potential harm to herself or others or if she is struggling with a mental health concern of great magnitude, especially if it interferes with her ability to have a productive camp experience, reach out to the Girls Group staff, Master Counselor, or Master Teacher and explain the situation. Additionally, if you are a temporary employee (summer staff, intern), it is also important that salient changes in girls living situations or struggles girls are facing be communicated to a permanent/year-round staff member.

If a girl indicates to you that she is being abused, physically or emotionally, or if you see indications of abuse, you must report it immediately to a camp Co-Director. **All High Rocks employees are mandated reporters of child abuse**. The Co-Directors in consultation with the Executive Director will use their discretion to decide if and when Child Protective Services (CPS) should be called.

If a girl does tell you that she is being abused, is abusing another, or that she is in severe physical or emotional distress, but asks you to keep it confidential, it is appropriate to tell her that you are ethically bound to break her confidence and that it could result in our having to call CPS. It may also be appropriate to warn a girl in the early stages of her disclosure that the confidence must be broken and that these steps must be taken if she chooses to continue talking to you.

Staff communication at camp

As emphasized earlier, it is always better to over-communicate than have people be out of the loop. Staff cannot effectively perform their roles at camp if they do not have necessary information about schedules, changes to schedules, special days, girls that will be missing from class/tracks for any reason, honor code violation proceedings, or the results of any emergency situation. At the same time however, it is important to conduct oneself and communicate with other staff in a way that always privileges the experience of the girls at camp as paramount.

**Best practices to promote excellent staff communication at camp**:

* Answer the phone if it rings near you. If you cannot find the appropriate staff member for whom the call is aimed, or you don’t know the answer to a question posed to you by the caller, take a message and remember to give it to the appropriate staff member.
* Camp Assistant Director should aim to be distributing schedules for special days at least two days in advance, and should distribute new printed schedules or girl/pod groupings as soon as possible if any changes are made.
* Camp Assistant Director is the information “hub” and shall communicate any pertinent issues/information between staff meetings.
* Camp Assistant Director will also post and/or write on whiteboard in the picnic shelter any information and updates about general schedule changes for girls and staff to see.
* Exchange information that is only relevant/appropriate for staff in places and at moments that are private from the girls. Try not to create exclusive/private spaces in moments or spaces that should be public/inclusive. Take the staff member on a walk, talk in the lodge, behind the picnic shelter, etc.

Power struggles and staff conflict

We are all human, and instances of miscommunication, conflict, and power struggles have occurred and will occur among the staff. However, camp only works and the girls only have their most excellent camp experience if all the staff is on the same team. As such, it is necessary to hold ourselves to high standards of conflict resolution and personal responsibility.

**Best practices for solving staff conflict and power struggles**:

* Remember that camp is first and foremost about the girls. Ask yourself if your staff conflict is affecting their experience of camp or only affecting you/other staff. If it is affecting the girls’ experience, take your concerns immediately to a camp Co-Director. If it is only affecting you/other staff, try to solve the issue yourself first. Try to disengage from the power struggle (see BAG OF TRICKS). Consider waiting until camp is over. If it feels pressing, consider speaking privately with the staff member with whom you are having conflict and seeing if you can’t resolve the issue through a direct, private, conversation. If you still cannot resolve the issue and it is still affecting your experience of camp/your ability to do your job, consider asking a camp CoDirector or other veteran staff member to mediate an additional private conversation.
* If you have an issue with how something has been handled or the behavior of another staff member, check in with yourself. Ask yourself, can I communicate this issue without being hurtful? If you can’t, it may be better solved by directing it to a camp Co-Director.
* If you think another staff person is not holding up their responsibilities at camp or communicating well and you feel it is impacting your experience or the girls’ experience of camp, take your concerns privately to a camp Co-director at your soonest available opportunity. This will avoid letting your resentments fester and will allow the camp Co-Director to act as an impartial mediator without spreading ill will among the staff.

When you’re “on” – Campground mode and personal wellness

Mental, physical, and emotional wellness is an integral part of the High Rocks camp culture. Camp is a challenging environment, and it is difficult to be a contributing member of the camp community and experience the daily joy of the camp experience if you are not actively maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Staff should provide a supportive network to each other to ensure that individual wellness is happening.

Basic concepts of personal wellness:

* Get plenty of restful sleep. If your shelter assignment is making this difficult, speak to the Assistant Director about being moved to another bed.
* **Be intentional about taking time for yourself when you need it!** For example, if you are “on” but need personal time, take a 10 minute walk by yourself, or if you are frustrated and need to “vent,” wait until evening staff time, away from the girls, to unwind with fellow staff.
* Maintain healthy eating habits. This is not only important for your personal wellness, but the atmosphere of overall health and wellness you are modeling for the girls at camp.
* Figure out what “fills you up” emotionally, mentally and physically. Prioritize these activities both “on” and “off” the clock. Work in the garden, jog around the camp-ground, take a 20 minute nap, lay in the hammocks.

Use of the lodge

If you are working camp, your use of the lodge should be minimal. The lodge is a functional office space for those staff who need to carry out year-round responsibilities not pertaining to camp. It is also a space separate from camp, more connected to the world, containing staff private property and technological equipment. For these reasons, the lodge is a staff-only space during NB camp, though in CS, girls do often use the lodge as a classroom space for their tracks. Within reason, girls are generally discouraged from walking through the lodge to get to the school house, and discouraged from using the bathrooms in the lodge, as water is extremely limited.

It’s reasonable to use the lodge resources to print lesson plans, make copies, find materials, etc. The camp Assistant Director and Assistant Director intern will likely use the lodge a lot, as will the Master Counselor to call parents. New Beginnings’ Creative Expressions class leaders will likely need to use the lodge for water and clean up purposes. **Aside from these specified purposes, try to use the lodge as little as possible,** and avoid hanging out in the lodge for extended periods of time unless it is a specified planning period. Simply put, being in the lodge makes it harder to find you if there is an emergency, makes it harder for you to have your finger on the pulse of camp, and makes it impossible for you to notice if the kitchen staff needs help during down times, not to mention simply taking you out of the head space of camp. When in doubt of where to go/what to do, stay in the field/picnic shelter area, and/or check in with the kitchen team.

Last day of camp

The last day of camp is designed to showcase the work girls have done at camp to each other and to their families, as well as acting as a kind of bridge between camp and regular life by giving the girls and families information about what it means to be an active and engaged High Rocks girl year-round.

Note: It’s helpful to encourage all staff to move their own personal vehicles from the campground or lodge area to behind the horse arena for the last day of camp. This frees up a lot of parking for girls’ families.

Again, though the exact schedule will change from year to year, it generally follows the following pattern:

Wake ups, and breakfast as usual, followed by pod cleaning and packing up. During this time, girls pack up their belongings, and clean their pods (sweeping, taking off any decorations, picking up trash, etc.). It’s helpful to have JCs (NB) and/or Pod Mamas/pod staff help girls during this process, as that ensures these tasks are performed in a timely manner, and provides an adult to troubleshoot any issues that may arise (sleeping bag rolling, broken tubs, etc.). One staff person may also be designated as a kind of “inspector” to come around and make sure all the pods have been sufficiently cleaned.

Then there are brief sessions in classes (NB) or tracks (CS). It is during these brief sessions that class/track core teachers will be facilitating girls to plan their presentations for the parents and camp as a whole. Teachers may have already started presentation planning in the final day of classes as well, time permitting.

Additionally, depending on the schedule rotation for exact timing, girls must sit down and complete camp evaluations at some point in the morning of the last day. These evaluations are essential for getting girl feedback and collecting data for grant narratives and internal research.

Simultaneously while all the above things are happening, the kitchen staff and any other available staff will be preparing a big meal and setting up the picnic shelter to accommodate the extra big crowd of girls and their parents.

Around midday, parents and families will begin to arrive to pick up their girls. Similar to the first day, parents will trickle in and there will likely be some time in which staff are simply chatting and hanging out with parents. Parents are encouraged to load their girls’ belongings into their vehicles as soon as possible and park their cars in the field. It’s helpful to speak especially to the parents of girls with whom you personally had significant interactions (they were in your class/track/girls group, etc.) so that you can offer detailed anecdotes/stories/updates to their parents.

Following the arrival of the majority of girls’ families, the staff, girls, and families will eat lunch together, and staff will be assigned a certain number of “conferences” to complete by the end of lunch/midday hours (specifics varying from year to year). The conferences are an opportunity for one staff member to meet with one girl and her family for 15-20 minutes to discuss her progress at camp, as well as her long-term academic goals, and how the High Rocks 5 year, year-round scholarship program can help her achieve these goals. This is also a good time to ask girls about their college hopes and plans (especially in CS) and to emphasize that it is never too early to begin thinking about college. Finally, these conferences are also a good time to remind parents that High Rocks programs are free and require continuous support, and ask them to consider giving, either money or services. It is helpful if the Assistant Director develops a printed sheet of talking points for these conferences that she can distribute to all staff who are conducting conferences.

Following conferences and lunch, all girls, staff, and families will gather, usually at the campfire ring for the start of presentations. Presentations may take the form of a spoken explanation, group poem, demonstration, or un-guided show, but they are designed to showcase the accomplishments and/or skills girls learned at camp and provide an intentional place for parents to share in these changes and be proud of their girls’ accomplishments. Girls group, science and math will usually present in the campfire ring or immediate vicinity (NB) or there may be a track that wants to use the campfire ring for their presentation (CS). Depending on what tracks are being offered (CS) there will most likely be other presentations up at the campground (Building for example).

Then all parents, girls, and staff will descend down the hill to the lodge area. We generally ask parents to drive their cars containing all girl stuff down to the lodge so they can leave directly from there. Presentations continue down the hill; usually creative expressions will do a show in the school house and the horse show takes place in the horse arena (NB), or tracks will use the school house and/or downstairs lodge area to present media/theater/art-related work (CS).

When all the presentations have been completed, the staff has traditionally formed a kind of “hug” line near Virginia’s house, so that girls can efficiently say their goodbyes and then rejoin their parents so they can go home. It’s customary for staff to remain in this line and sing the “goodbye song” (see List of Traditions) until all the girls have been driven out of the campground by their parents.

ALL STAFF will then walk back up the hill to help strike/shut down the campground. The extent of these tasks depends on if it is NB or CS camp. CS camp requires a more extensive campground clean up, including the transport of all kitchen utensils and equipment down to the lodge, because it is the end of the summer use of the campground (unless there is Nettlefest or a retreat).

Some general tasks that must be accomplished in the last day clean up, regardless of which camp it is:

* Pack up all perishable food, empty all bear shed fridges, and transport down to lodge or give away to staff
* Do all remaining dishes
* Collect all trash and compost, take it to the dump or to the compost pile
* Bring down to lodge all paper/markers/supplies/materials/books from the aviary, white tent, picnic shelter that could be damaged or lost in wind/rain/exposure to elements
* Clean up the school house and library/take down any class shows hung there

Following the clean-up, staff will then fill out their camp evaluations. These are also very important tools in assessing the success of camp and making changes from year to year. Once these are completed, the entire staff will meet together to acknowledge the end of camp, pat ourselves on the back, and do a closing. It is also common that after the closing, the Co-Directors and Assistant Director of camp arrange a small, optional, thank you party for the entire staff at an off-site location.

Best practices specific to New Beginnings camp

Junior Counselors (JCs)

* The JCs are an important element of New Beginnings camp in that they are the ones who will truly be showing the new girls what it means to be a High Rocks girl, and are invaluable resources for modeling especially at meals, campfire, fun time and on the hike. They are an essential part of the chain of communication about girl issues, etc., as they are very useful in being plugged in to the pods and other unstructured girl-only spaces.
* It is not uncommon for JCs to struggle with the transition from girl to JC as being a JC is a paid job, and thus they are no longer being taken care of by the staff to the same extent, but are rather expected to take care of others, and place the experience of the new girls above their own experience. Additionally, JCs all take an academically demanding class of their own which should push them very hard towards preparing them for the academic demands of college. They may feel overwhelmed or require academic support from staff. Be sensitive to these needs, and support them to complete all their work.
* If a staff person has a concern about the ability of a JC to complete her job effectively, or is engaged in a power struggle or conflict with a JC, consult the staff person in charge of the JC program.

Hike Day

* Every year, about a third of the way into New Beginnings camp, we surprise the girls by canceling their classes for that day and take them on a long group hike up the mountain to the High Rocks lookout. The Hike is an important and sacred tradition that is very physically challenging for many of the girls, but that functions as a highly effective tool to bond the girls together and give each girl a sense of personal accomplishment and pride.
* In general, we try to keep the hike a surprise and not mention it at all around the girls. Some girls may have suspicions or think they know because of having siblings or friends who were High Rocks girls. Try not to confirm or deny any questions about if there is a hike or details of the hike until Hike Day.
* On the morning of Hike Day, the girls will be woken up as usual, assembled for breakfast, and then told all at once that they will be hiking. They should be given a list of things they’ll need to wear and bring (boots, socks, water bottle, back pack) and staff should be on hand to find and distribute any gear the girls don’t have. JCs and Pod Mamas should go with the girls in their pods to help them dress and pack. Some girls will most likely be anxious or even unwilling to go, and JCs and pod staff should be reassuring but firm.
* The exact schedule will depend on the Master Teacher’s specific plan, but the morning will consist of a combination of: a skills clinic to learn how to use a map and compass, a JC skit to psych the girls up for their journey, and a facilitated group session where the girls look at the map and decide, collectively, on which route they will take. All the while that the girls and select staff are engaging in these activities, the kitchen staff and all other available staff will be packing lunch and snack bags. Staff that are going on the hike should be packing their own bags and sharing the responsibility of carrying safety supplies between them (see safety supplies and procedure at end of Hike section).
* Two veteran staff members should be designated as the staff leaders of the hike, and in consultation with the Master Counselor, should create pairs (or small groups if odd) of girls who will be leading partners. These leading pairs will rotate through in time chunks of approximately 20-30 minutes, and when they are leading, will be solely in charge of using the map and compass and picking the direction and route choices for the entire group. Staff hike leaders should keep track of time and make sure the groups rotate appropriately.
* The goal of all staff that go on the Hike is to keep girl morale up and keep them safe. There are always girls who do not want to go on the hike, or that are facing real physical difficulty, and it is the responsibility of the staff (and JCs) to provide motivation and support. Frequent breaks to rest and snack are OK, and it is important that the entire group move together and not get separated. Staff should intersperse themselves throughout the group, so that there are staff in the front, middle, and end, to support girls that move at different paces. Staff should also help communicate between the parts of the hiking group when people need to take breaks or stop due to injury, etc.
* Hike Leaders will have walkie talkies to communicate with campground staff and in case of emergency. The walkie talkies should be used discreetly and out of ear shot of the girls.
* While the girls and Hike staff are in the woods, non-Hike staff that remained at the campground will be preparing a big Thanksgiving-esque dinner and decorating the picnic shelter to welcome the hikers back.
* A crew of non-Hike staff will drive a cooler of drinks and snacks up to the High Rocks lookout and wheel it in, and leave it unattended for the hikers to discover.
* Once all the girls and hiking staff have reached the High Rocks lookout and had some of their food prize, the Hike Day Leaders will facilitate some group processing (appreciation circle, round about the biggest challenge, etc.) and then an individual writing prompt. The girls will spread out a bit around the lookout and journal. When sufficient time has passed, the Hike Day Leaders will begin to instruct girls, one by one, that they walk the trail out to the scenic highway parking lot, allowing space between each girl, so that the hike out is individual and in silence.
* **To recap, the two staff Hike Day Leaders will:**
  + Make girl leader pairs
  + Make sure leaders switch off
  + Keep a pulse on the general pace of the hike. Make sure the front and Back are communicating. Facilitate any conversations about hike pace as necessary.
  + Communicate with campground staff as necessary
  + Make the final call on any emergency situations
  + Facilitate processing at the top and walking out one by one
* **Staff supplies that should be split among staff packs:**
  + Walkie talkies
  + Comprehensive first aid kit (including moleskin, ankle brace)
  + EpiPen
  + Portable stretcher
  + Extra water
  + A blanket
  + Flashlights
  + Sunscreen
  + Ice packs

The Pledge

* The High Rocks pledge is a cornerstone of the HR community. It is the foundation of the honor code which bonds all members together in trust and mutual respect.
* The pledge is as follows: “*I (insert pledgetakers name) do solemnly swear to have respect for myself, respect for others, and respect for this place in order to uphold the traditions of honestly, loyalty, trust, acceptance and adventure founded by the girls that have come before me, as I am now a sister of the High Rocks.”*
* Any new member to the High Rocks community (girl or staff) is not considered fully “active” or bound by the honor code until they take the pledge. One takes the pledge by memorizing it and reciting it from memory at a communal gathering (usually campfire). At NB camp, new girls are strongly encouraged to learn and take the pledge. JCs are generally the ones that work with new girls to memorize the pledge, but staff do as well. Be supportive of girls learning and taking the pledge, help them practice, etc.
* If you are a new staff member who has never been to a camp before, you are also encouraged to take the pledge at campfire sometime during NB camp.

Best practices specific to Camp Steele

Academic support

* Camp Steele offers a focused learning environment over a sustained period of time, and is thus the most effective and precious teaching space we have available to us. CS offers us the opportunity to take great strides in teaching the girls core skills they will need to be successful students and delving deeply into complex material.
* It is essential that every track at CS be moving the girls forward in one of the core competencies (see CORE COMEPTENCIES).
* CS should also contain the space, through free time, fun time, Girls Group, and interstitial unstructured times, the opportunity to move forward in tangible ways, in their thinking and preparation for college. Juniors and seniors should be encouraged to spend time filling out their FAFSAs, working on their college application essays, and asking questions about the college process and having them answered. Any girl that needs time in the lodge to work on the above projects should be allowed it.

Float Day/Fun Day

* About two-thirds of the way into CS, classes will be cancelled and we will surprise the girls with some sort of Fun Day. Though the activity may vary, the goal is to allow the girls a day of outdoor fun and relaxation so that they may bond as a group, and simply enjoy being at camp.
* In recent years, this day has included a float down the Greenbrier river in inner tubes rented from Jack Horner’s Corner. It has also included blueberry picking, a visit to Beartown park.
* In general, Fun Day requires about half of the camp staff to go on the Fun Day with the girls – to drive cars (shuttle cars to the take out in case of river floating) and hang out with girls – while allowing the other half of the camp staff (including the kitchen staff) to stay at the campground and take needed wellness and mental health breaks.
* Fun Day requires much preparation, however. The Master Teacher will decide the plan for Fun Day and create a Fun Day schedule and plan, including which staff will go with the girls and which staff will stay. The kitchen staff (and any staff not going with the girls) will prepare bag lunches and snacks for the girls and Fun Day staff.
* Water, sunblock, a first aid kit, and girl medical forms (should be permanently in both vans and the hybrid) must be taken along on the Fun Day in case of dehydration or medical emergency.

Starlight overnight

* Previously the backpacking trip, the Starlight Overnight is designed to be a controlled outdoor adventure activity that challenges the girls to sleep in the woods and cook their own food, while having fun and bonding with one another.
* The exact schedule will vary from year to year, but generally, on the day of the Starlight Overnight, girls will attend tracks for some period of time in the morning. They will then be told that they are going on the overnight (many girls will have done it before and will expect it) and the following will happen in preparation:
  + They will be asked to put down preferences of if they would like to go alone, with one other person, or in a group of three
  + They will be taught how to make a fire and throw their food bag over a tree, talked to about using plastic sheet to make a shelter
  + They will be told what they need to bring and will go pack (hiking boots, socks, sleeping bag, pillow, rain gear, backpack, flashlight) and staff will round up extras for any girl that doesn’t have these things
  + There will be some kind of gearing up/wisdom sharing session to answer girls’ worries (sometimes oldest girls do a funny skit)
  + Kitchen staff and available staff make food bags (enough for dinner, and a breakfast snack)
  + Kitchen staff and available staff make supply bags (toilet paper, trowel, matches, cardboard for kindling, rope, sheet of plastic)
  + Master Counselors and Girls Group staff will make pairings/groupings/solo assignments for the overnight. If oldest girl bonding has been lacking, seniors/oldest girls may be allowed to spend the night all together in a big group far away from the rest of the girls.
* When the girls are all packed up and ready to go, they will assemble in the field and a staff member will read out the groupings/solo arrangements and give a pep talk to get them excited to take off.
* 3-5 Staff members will then take girls into the woods via the waterfall path or knoll/grazing allotment path and “drop off” the overnight groupings/solos at designated spots, allowing enough space between camp sites such that the groupings or solos will be maintained. In general, girls should be deep enough into the woods that they have the experience of being in a foreign environment, but not so far away that staff couldn’t get to them quickly in case of an emergency. Any large grouping, particularly of the oldest girls, should be given more space (the grazing allotment, etc).
* Enough staff should remain in the campground such that in case of emergency or terribly bad weather, staff could collect the girls easily. In past years, a gator has also been borrowed from Joe Riley in order to have a speedy way to do so.
* There should be a safety plan made to make sure if there was an emergency, girls could communicate with staff. Sometimes, staff have made rounds periodically as it gets dark, walking around the campground and walking quietly out the waterfall road to get a sense of how the girls are doing and make sure there are no emergencies or girls trying to sneak back to their pods. Alternatively, staff has snuck up to the clearing above the waterfall trail or in the knoll and slept there. Girls’ safety should be balanced with maintaining the integrity of their wilderness experience.
* Girls will start to come back into camp as soon as the sun is up, and they should be greeted warmly and with a special breakfast, as they will likely be hungry and tired. There will also be a special Girls Group processing session in the late morning so that girls may share their adventure stories with one another.

List of traditions

* Don Gatto
* Owl and the Pussycat – Susan’s rendition
* West Virginia song round
* Hiding the silverware @ one meal
* Trash Bag Dresses & fancy dinner after hike
* “Because” frames for NB girls
* Graduation frames with well wishes for rising college freshman
* Letting people who have never been to High Rocks before eat first
* Graduating seniors lead Gratefuls on last night of Camp Steele
* BVDs (older girls)
* Secret Angels/Sisters. What are you good at? circle.
* Forced to do BVDs if leave excessive amount of personal items at picnic shelter after dinner
* LOA (Lots of Attention)
* JCs tie girls together at meal at NB
* Lullabye/picking someone to say goodnight
* Goodbye song on last day
* H2O hike bracelets by JCs
* Star party

1. For the purposes of this document, “staff” is defined as a High Rocks grown-up employed by High Rocks Educational Corporation. Salaried staff, AmeriCorps members, and Interns are all included in this use of “staff” unless otherwise specified. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)