



HIGH ROCKS 101: COMPANION HANDOUT

I. HIGH ROCKS MISSION STATEMENT

The High Rocks for Girls mission is to support and strengthen young West Virginia women from all walks of life. Our purpose is to educate, empower and inspire girls, giving them the confidence to lead active lives and work toward the long-term betterment of our community.

II. VISION: WHO ARE WE? WHAT DO WE DO?

High Rocks is a global model for leadership development and transformational education for young people in Appalachia. Learning from our work with teen girls, we craft transformational experiences for young people that move them significantly and irrevocably forward in life. Our goal is to combat the root causes of poverty and apathy at their core, and we believe that the most effective way to do that is to invest in young people. We

- Educate: teaching to produce educated, nimble, hungry minds and innovative teachers
- Empower: increasing local ownership, personal responsibility, identity and pride
- Inspire: evolving the individual's leadership path and gift of service

We believe in the transformative power of single-sex education and spaces for girls, and High Rocks is and always will be a powerful center for women and girls. In addition, as we grew with our girls we also started also working with the boys who were drawn to them and hungry for the opportunities and challenges we had to offer. Now, we work with young women and men, ages 13-25, emerging as leaders in schools and communities.

We believe in local economies and place-based education, so we focus our work primarily on our core communities located closest to our home base, secondarily on West Virginia, and thirdly across the central Appalachian region. We offer resources, services and opportunities to any young person from or invested in the Appalachian region.

High Rocks is a strong and vibrant organization; we are a community and a family. We are a cutting-edge learning lab of experiential education and teacher education, committed to equality, justice, and the power of the individual.

Our campground, lodge and offices are located in Hillsboro, West Virginia, and we operate High Rocks centers in Lewisburg and Richwood, West Virginia. We partner with area schools, community groups, government agencies, and libraries. Regionally and nationally, we partner with social justice groups, funding organizations, and colleges and universities. All these partnerships are vital to our effectiveness in our rural area.

IV. HIGH ROCKS BEST PRACTICES

Support girls to be their BEST SELVES. We

1. guide girls to examine their own beliefs and values rather than impose our own.
2. ensure that all girls have weekly access to one-on-one attention from trustworthy adults.
3. model healthy lifestyle choices, social/environmental responsibility and respect for diversity.
4. practice self-development and self-identification in a same-sex environment that minimizes the influence of sexual pressures.
5. believe in the power of positive energy among young people and the importance of positive mentors and peer groups.
6. apply the label "gifted" to all girls, and renounce other labels.

Raise THINKERS and DOERS. We

7. build creative thinking through the arts, math, writing, and science.
8. believe that challenges build perseverance, self-worth, ownership of one's choices, and faith.
9. praise quality of effort rather than natural ability or outcome.

10. push girls to more deeply engage with themselves and the world around them by approaching activism from the ground up, valuing personal experience for its intrinsic value and as an indicator of broader cultural and societal issues.
11. create opportunities for girls to practice their best-selves in new environments to build confidence, flexible thinking, and respect for diversity.

Build COMMUNITY. We

12. value the strength of an intergenerational network of women.
13. honor many girls natural tendency to form groups by creating collaborative groups that support their best-selves, transformations, and learning.
14. create "group agreements" to set norms and processes for group problem-solving and interactions (rather outside policing by a top-down authority structure).
15. adhere to an honor code created by our girls that prioritizes healing and restitution over punishment.

Grow a healthy ORGANIZATION. We

16. take care of ourselves and each other to keep inspiration, enthusiasm, and engagement authentic.
17. involve girls' voices, leadership, and ownership in the direction of our organization by creating a variety of opportunities for input (as paid board consultants, as facility designers, in one-on-one conversations with staff, program evaluations).
18. use mid-program and final evaluations to make programming adjustments and inform future efforts.
19. create occasions to express our gratitude for each other.
20. build a community of leaders with leadership education for all members and leadership opportunities within all levels of the organization.

III. HIGH ROCKS ADMISSIONS

High Rocks girls...

- Have a sense of adventure
- Are creative in some way
- Enjoy challenges
- Want to work hard (at something)
- Think deeply about ideas
- Are kind towards others
- Have a strong sense of what is fair
- Are academically motivated

- Have leadership potential
- Come from every lunch table in the cafeteria

V. CORE COMPETENCIES (WHAT EVERY HIGH ROCKS GIRL SHOULD HAVE BY THE END OF HER 6 YEARS)

- Be a lifelong learner
- Be able to see the world/an issue/problem from different points of view
- Have a strong sense of identity/place/culture
- Be a strong public speaker
- Have a strong plan for what's next in her life
- Have strong analytical skills
- Have emotional maturity - be able to look at problems/challenges constructively
- Assume control of her destiny
- Have a clear understanding of community
- Have a personal dedication to the greater goal
- Have an experience of herself as a community leader
- Have awareness of environmental stewardship
- Be wellness/health literate
- Have travel competency/adventure competency
- Have life planning skills
- Know how to participate in a group