



PREPARING YOUR STUDENT FOR NATURE'S CLASSROOM INSTITUTE

Sending your student to NCI for the first time can be a stressful time. To help ease their transition from home life to life at NCI, we have compiled a list of tips and techniques that we hope will help every student be successful during their time away from home. It is important to remember that their ownership over even the smallest decisions will help your student by increasing their positive perceptions of the new environment.

1. Often the biggest homesick issues stem from never having been “on their own” overnight. If your student has never spent the night away from home, try scheduling a sleepover or two with a close friend or classmate in advance of their NCI visit.
2. Have your student take responsibility for getting ready for the day. Making their bed, serving their own food and beverage at the table, and getting dressed by themselves are all things they will be responsible for while at NCI.
3. Help your student learn to shower and fix their hair independently. With many students sharing a bathroom, time is often limited. We ask students to take 5 minute showers, so all have access to hot water and the opportunity to shower daily.
4. Review the packing list with your student; however, allow them to pack their own bag. This way they have complete ownership of the contents, location of items, and ease of accessibility. This may be something you want to practice in advance for a sleepover, school, etc. Let them practice living out of their suitcase for a few days as a practice run to see if they remembered to pack everything they anticipate needing.
5. Show your student how to neatly fold and organize their belongings in their luggage so their items can be easily accessed.



6. Resist the urge to pick up after your student. Let them be responsible for keeping track of their belongings; they will need to be at NCI!
7. NCI is an 'electronics-free zone'. Help your student adjust to life without cell phones, iPods, e-readers, TVs and other electronics.
8. If your student is used to sleeping with a television on, music playing, etc., help them adjust to the sound of natural background noises or a fan (if they chose to pack one).
9. Talk openly about homesickness and help your student find coping strategies to manage their homesick feelings if they arise. Don't promise to immediately pick them up if homesickness strikes or if they don't like NCI upon arrival. This will only send the message to your student that you are not confident that they have the skills to cope with being independent while away from home and can ultimately put you, your student's teacher and your student in a very difficult situation.

Tips to Combat Homesickness:

1. Resist the urge to tell your student how much you are going to miss them, and that you do not know what to do without them at home. This may make your child feel guilty for leaving home and increase the possibility of homesickness. Rather, tell them that you are going to miss having them at home, but know what a fantastic experience it will be and you cannot wait to hear all about it.
2. Do not tell your student that they will be able to call home every night. As we are an electronics free zone, calling home is solely at the discretion of their teacher. Rather tell them to save their stories for when they get home so they can tell you in person. If your student is nervous they won't remember everything, encourage them to maintain a journal throughout their visit.



3. Practice good table manners with your student to prepare them for family-style dining. Teach them to appropriately set tables, use utensils, how to cut meat, etc.
4. Openly discuss how your child's household responsibilities will be managed while they are gone. For example, if it is your student's job to feed the dog before school every day, ensure them that the other family members will make sure the dog's food is attended to while they are gone.
5. Learn as much about NCI as possible. Please explore our website with your student: www.discovernci.org. Read our staff bios, and information about a day in the life at NCI.
6. In advance of NCI, try to meet with other students or teachers who have attended NCI in years past, so your student can ask them questions about what to expect.
7. Be sure to talk to your student and address any concerns or questions that they may have. If you cannot answer their questions, talk to their teacher or contact NCI in advance.
8. If you have any specific concerns about your student's adjustment and comfort, please talk to their teacher before attending NCI as they are with your student when issues tend to arise.
9. Finally, and this one is for you parents/guardians, think about ways to keep yourself busy, so you do not worry as much about your student. They will not be worried about you; they will be having too much fun!