Experiential Learning

2020-2021
GRADES 9–12

DV Friends
Experiential Learning at DVFriends

We understand that sometimes, you have to get your hands dirty in order to truly learn. Some of the most profound and memorable learning experiences occur when students are challenged with immersive, hands-on experiences and approaches. We use both direct instruction and experience-based learning in our program because we recognize the importance of both approaches in effective education, particularly for students with learning differences. Providing a variety of opportunities for experiential instruction can reveal strengths and abilities often untapped and unnoticed in more traditionally structured environments. Our ABLE and service programs are examples of experience-based learning, where students discover new areas in which they may excel.
Know the Ropes

October 2020

This course takes place on the Westtown School campus in West Chester, PA and our group makes full use of the extensive ropes course facility on site. The course progresses from ground level activities to low-ropes work, and on to a series of high-ropes elements, encouraging students through the use of Challenge by Choice to allow each participant to do as much as they can without being overwhelmed. Through supporting others, providing for their physical safety, and working together, the group experiences the benefits of teamwork, by doing more than they could individually. This course runs two days per week for three weeks.

Cost | none

For details and to register online: dvfriends.org/ABLE_ropes/
After a series of class meetings to learn the basics, this course starts with a day at the Doylestown Rock Gym, where everyone works on the skills needed to control the safety line (belaying) for the climber. The following five outings take place outdoors, on real rock, at High Rocks Vista in Ralph Stover State Park. Students climb at different locations each day, with increasing height, challenge, and difficulty. The final day takes place on a climb called “Open Face,” which is 110 feet from bottom to top. Students choose their level of difficulty and are encouraged to challenge their limits. No prior climbing experience needed. This course runs two days per week for three weeks.

Cost | none

For details and to register online: dvfriends.org/ABLE_rocks/
Bike Touring

October 1-6, 2020

The ABLE Bike Touring course is a classic DVFriends experience. You will start by choosing a bike from the ABLE fleet. A few practice rides will help to get our leg muscles tuned up and our butts ready for sitting on a bike seat all day. Ready for the challenge, the group is dropped off in Cumberland, Maryland where they start a 180 mile, six-day ride to Washington, DC. Riding on the Chesapeake & Ohio (C & O) tow-path following the Potomac River, the group visits small towns and camps at established campsites along the way. Traveling from West to East, the trail goes downhill, but it is still a challenging pedal. Over the years, not every DV group has made it all the way to DC. All you need is to be able to ride a bike and the desire to do it.

Cost | none

For details and to register online: dvfriends.org/ABLE_bike_touring/
Ski Touring

February 15-20, 2021

No prior experience necessary. This course aims to teach the basic skills of traditional cross-country skiing. We spend most days in Osceola, NY located in the Tug Hill region of upstate New York. Not to be confused with downhill skiing, there are no ski lifts and no man-made snow. When not skiing, we spend time indoors – lunch is at the ski center, and nights are in a fishing lodge. In addition to skiing, participants cook group meals, do the dishes, and keep the lodge clean daily. Ski gear will be provided for all students, and appropriate ski clothing can be borrowed from the DVFriends ABLE lockers. There is no need to buy anything extra for this course.

Cost | none

For details and to register online: dvfriends.org/ABLE_ski_touring/
Rails-To-Trails Biking

April/May, 2021

This course was new last year and very popular, but was canceled due to COVID-19. The course consists of six full-day rides (two days per week for three weeks). The rides are all single-day experiences mostly within a short drive from Paoli. Before going anywhere, students will learn to fit their bike and to do basic care and repair such as fixing a flat tire. With so many bike trails in the area, each ride will take place at a different location. The final day is scheduled on a Saturday to allow the group to bike the Lehigh Gorge trail into Jim Thorpe, in the Poconos. Bikes will be provided by the ABLE department unless individuals have their own bike that is suitable.

Cost | none

For details and to register online: dvfriends.org/ABLE_rails_to_trails/
Sailing Nassau Bahamas

December 17-22, 2020

The ABLE program has been sailing with Captain Ian for four plus years now and he has served us well. Next year Captain Ian and the sailing vessel Bahama Star will be operating out of Nassau, in the Bahamas. This has been the summer cruising area for the last few years and Captain Ian knows the area well. There is high potential for better sailing, better snorkeling and better fishing. Day one will still be a long day, the same as it was sailing in the Keys, as the group will fly to Nassau and then sail to northern Exumas before dropping anchor for the night. We will spend most of the week in the Exumas; island hopping, swimming, snorkeling, fishing and possibly getting in a hike or two. Having more places where the crew can get off the boat is also an advantage of sailing in the Bahamas. The crew will be all on one boat, the Bahama Star, but everyone will have a bed and plenty of room. Don’t forget, the students are the crew and we will be raising the sails, hauling anchor, cooking, doing dishes, and swabbing the deck. This course is limited to eight students, so sign up early. No experience is necessary; you do not need to know how to swim.

Cost | $2,600

For details and to register online: dvfriends.org/ABLE_sailing_bahamas/
Moab Mountain Biking

March 26-31, 2021

This course was scheduled for last year, but it was canceled due to COVID-19. We will take a group of students to Moab, Utah for a six-day mountain biking trip. Moab and the Canyonlands National Park is considered to be the center of mountain biking in the United States. The ride will be guided by the staff of Rim Tours. We fly right into Moab, Utah, a small airport that is only minutes away from where the biking begins. The route is mostly double-track, so there will not be a lot of rocks or roots to ride over and definitely no boulders or ledging to jump off. Mountain biking is not conducive to carrying our camping gear on the bikes, so a support truck will meet us each night with the camping gear. Students will need to help with all the camp duties of setting up tents, cooking, and washing dishes. On day five we will be back in Moab getting ready to fly home the following day. Bikes will be rented and the camping gear will come from the ABLE program.

Cost | $2,900

For details and to register online: dvfriends.org/ABLE_Moab_mountain_biking/
How to Register

All Experiential Learning ABLE Courses are open to students in Grades 9-12 for Course Credit. Students must complete one ABLE course to graduate.

Register online for the 2020-21 ABLE courses at: dvfriends.org/ABLEregistration/

Questions? Contact Ken Sinapius, ABLE Program Director at 610.640.4150 or ken.sinapius@dvfriends.org