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Mt Baker Snow School Intern

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COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT



Internship Title: Mt. Baker Snow School

Student Name: Katrina Doerflinger

Internship Dates: 2/17/23 - 3/9/23

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STUDENT SIGNATURE *Katrina Doerflinger*

DATE: 3/29/23

Katrina Doerflinger

ESCI 498B (1 credit)

Advisor: Rebecca Bunn

The Mt. Baker Snow School is an educational program that connects four establishments in Whatcom County: Mt. Baker Ski Area, the Northwest Avalanche Center, WWU's Living Snow Project, *and* the Bellingham School District. They have collaborated since 2013 with the shared goal of exposing middle schoolers to winter recreation and snow science.

This February and March I volunteered as an environmental educator with the program. I brought students up on the mountain to different outdoor lessons hosted by the Snow School's partners. I also had the opportunity to teach my own workshop on snow crystal formation in the atmosphere. This program is part of a 3-year-long education initiative called Snow to Sea to teach middle school students about our local watershed. We are their first exposure to this initiative at the very top of the watershed: Mt. Baker. It's so rewarding to see students, many of which have never been to Mt. Baker before, being curious and asking questions about the importance of our local snowpack.

During my time with the Mt. Baker Snow School, I was responsible for a group of 8 to 10 students. Every Snow School day looked fairly similar. The students arrived on their bus, I took my assigned group to Heather Meadows Lodge to get extra layers and snowshoes, and to use the bathroom. I then walked with them to their first of four stations. These stations included the Snow Water Equivalency station, the Snow Profile station, the Snow Algae station, and the Snow Crystal station. I taught the snow crystal station. After finishing all the stations we would walk back to the lodge, have lunch, and the students would go home on their bus.

Overall I think my internship was a success. I learned from it and I felt like I had a positive impact on students' experiences up on the mountain. Through this internship, I was able to practice my teaching techniques with a range of ages (12 to 15). I learned how to best engage different age groups, and I got better at understanding the specific needs and abilities of these age groups.

My host institutions (mainly NWAC and Mt. Baker Ski Area) were fairly successful in hosting Snow School. However, there are aspects they could improve on. For example, during our training, we didn't receive much guidance on how we could connect the learning stations to the larger Snow to Sea initiative. I think it would have been beneficial for students if we had focused more on how the snowpack at Mt. Baker connects to the large watershed.

Appendix

Snow School Hours Log

<i>Date</i>	<i># of hours</i>	<i>Description / Daily Reflection</i>
Training - 2/17/23	7:00-4:00 (9 hrs)	Today I received training from my supervisor (Greyson) on how field days are run at snow school and the expectations for instructors. We learned how to deal with gear and layers for the students. We also went through all 3 stations and learned about all the lessons we can complete with students.
SS D1 - 2/23/23	7:30-3:30 (8 hrs)	During our first day of snow school, I had 8 eighth graders in my group. We completed all three stations, as well as my own 20-minute lesson. I taught the snow crystal lesson during this time and played a round of "snow, sun, algae" with the students. One thing I was surprised by was how low-energy the students were. All they wanted to do was sit/lay in the snow. I expected them to be very high-energy (based on the younger age range I usually interact with). I love how curious they all were. Many students had very smart questions to ask and answers to give. It was hard to keep them

		engaged and listening the whole time though.
SS D2 - 3/2/23	8:00 - 4:00 (8 hrs)	During our second day of snow school, we were thrown a curve ball when the bus showed up an hour late! We had to be flexible and ended up taking the students to two stations instead of one. I took them to SWE and Snow Algae. I'm surprised at how well it went considering I had 10 students! These students had much more energy than the 8th graders did. I improved from last time in my wrangling and gave reminders of when to put on/take off layers. I still had issues getting snow shoes on effectively. The students just didn't have the strength, angles, and understanding of snowshoes to put them on themselves. I think I ended up physically helping every single student. Overall it was fun letting loose a bit and just chatting with the students. They didn't listen to me about the no-snowball rule though. I didn't lay down the law very well.
SS D3 - 3/9/23	8:00 - 2:30 (6.5 hrs)	Today was my last day at snow school. 6th graders from Nooksack Middle School came up. It was bittersweet because I felt like I was FINALLY getting into the flow of things, and now we have to leave. I wished these snow school days weren't so rushed, I want to get to know the students better. I liked how today I had a list of names of all 10 students I was paired with. It allowed me to actually learn their names and refer to them by name directly, that way I could connect with them more. Today was very

		<p>sunny and therefore warmer which made the students and I both more motivated. I also had 2 other instructors with me! That didn't happen on days 1 and 2. This allowed us to make sure the students' needs were met. I consciously adjusted my teaching to a lower grade level (from 8th to 6th), but I found the older head instructors at each station didn't really adjust their teaching methods, content, engagement questions, and vocabulary. Because of this, it seemed like some of the students were disengaged and didn't understand the take-home message of each lesson.</p>
TOTAL	31.5 hrs	