

The BIG Lesson Programs©

The BIG Lesson is a study trip that spans five consecutive days at a community site. Teachers and students immerse themselves in learning for a full week on in-depth study, working with experts on site, followed with teacher-led lessons and reinforced with independent observation and research time.

- *Annie's BIG Nature Lesson*© at Woldumar, Fenner, Bengel, and Harris Nature Centers, Lansing, and Kalamazoo Nature Center, Kalamazoo
- *The BIG Zoo Lesson*© at Potter Park Zoo
- *The BIG History Lesson*© at Michigan Historical Museum, Lansing, and Meridian Historic Village, Okemos
- *The BIG Science Lesson*© at Impression Five Museum, Lansing, and Detroit Science Center, Detroit

Key components of The BIG Lesson are:

- **Ongoing, sustained professional development for teachers:**
 - Teachers participate in extensive training to learn about Teaching in Informal Settings, Integrated Thematic Study, Science Process, Object-Based Learning, Visual Note-taking, Multiple Intelligences, Inquiry Methods for Learning, Engaging Parents in the Learning Process.
 - Teachers receive continuous support throughout the school year to design and implement thematic study for students.
 - Training is correlated with the Michigan Standards for Effective Teaching and Learning: Higher-Order Thinking, Deep Knowledge, Substantive Conversations, and Connections to the World Beyond the Classroom.
- **Lessons are teacher-led and student-centered:**
 - Teacher and Big Lesson director work together to design the week's lessons. Responsibility for teaching students is shared by teacher and site person (naturalists, scientists, veterinarian, zoo docents).
 - Each day on site includes a naturalist, scientist or docent-led lesson; teacher-led lessons to reinforce naturalist/scientist/docent lesson; an independent observation/research time for students.
 - Lessons include presentations by site experts (scientists, naturalists, docents, etc.), teacher-led lessons, and follow-up lessons to help students incorporate information they are learning each day.
 - Teachers design lessons that are correlated with Michigan Curriculum Standards and Benchmarks and match the curriculum and how students learn.
- **Extended time**
 - Extended time is the key for immersion into the natural world, and making sense of the deep knowledge they are gaining at the community site.
 - Students choose a topic to research, and use an hour each day for independent study time to observe, discuss, write, and draw.
- **Parent involvement**
 - Parents learn along with students and assist in leading small groups of students.
 - Teachers provide training for parents before The BIG Lesson week so that parents are comfortable in their expanded role with students.
- **Year-long themes**
 - Teachers use the site as their classroom for the week, changing the concept of "field trip" to "study trip".
 - The week serves as a catalyst for a year-long thematic study. Naturalists, scientists, or docents may choose to visit the classroom for lessons before and after The BIG Lesson week.
 - Personal connections build for the teacher, students, and naturalists/scientists as the year unfolds.

For information, contact:

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