

ARCHEOLOGY AND STUDENTS -- CAN THEY MIX?

The professional archeological community has often cast a jaundiced eye on the use of archeological sites for the purpose of high school education. Some educators view student excursions into such activities as embellishments or "frills" --- not as a potentially vital part of the total educational program of a system. Two questions arise: (1) Can archeology do anything for kids?; and (2) Can kids do anything for archeology?

We interviewed some former students from the Summer Seminar in Archeology, now entering their third year of volunteer work with the Fairfax County Archaeological Survey. Their answer to the first question was a resounding "Yes!" To begin with, they maintain, their grasp of both content and basic skills has been substantially strengthened. They have learned much about United States history, especially local history (our primary focus in Fairfax has been on historical archeology). They have gained some expertise in the identification of material culture forms ranging from architecture to farm tools and military equipment. Since archeology is essentially a research process, their skills in gathering, analyzing, and classifying data, and drawing inferences from it, have also received a very thorough toning. Moreover, the application of these and other skills has been transferred to a variety of other academic areas.

Students have gained personal dividends from participating in the field experience. Their perspectives have been broadened, and they have gained a new awareness of, and appreciation for, their environment, both physical and

and cultural. Because our summer seminars in Fairfax draw participants from all high schools in the county, the students have acquired a new circle of friends -- ones with whom they now share a unique set of experiences. These same students also remark that they never realized how much physical stamina they possessed until they endured the consistent 90°+ of a Virginia summer, chopping weeds and hauling dirt -- and survived! All agree that they have become more self-disciplined and observant. Above all, they feel they have made a lasting, worthwhile contribution to their community.

Have they? Enter the professional archeologist.

High school volunteers have proven invaluable to the Fairfax County Archaeological Survey. Their laboratory and field work is equivalent to work done by the graduate and undergraduate students who traditionally comprise most archeology crews. Without their volunteer contributions, much of the archeological work accomplished in Fairfax County would be impossible.

The integration of the high school volunteers into the major projects undertaken in the county and the quality of their field supervisors have had the greatest impact on the success of the high school program. Students have not been relegated to performing boring, trivial, or makework tasks. No special projects have been created for them. For example, students were fully involved in the testing program undertaken at E.C. Lawrence Park, the major research project conducted last summer. Students are a vital part of the Fairfax County Archaeological Survey and have been treated as such.

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Two high school teachers give students direct supervision in the field. These supervisors have taken the time and expended the energies to attend formal training sessions in archeology. They have kept up with the discipline through reading, additional classwork, and convention attendance. The combination of their academic training, and their infectious enthusiasm for the discipline helps the students both educationally and personally.

Archeology is not, of course for everyone. We do not seek to

turn out professional archeologists. But we have found that virtually every student, whether liking or disliking the total experience in retrospect, has gained from the experience.

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One purpose of Anthro·Notes is to share new ideas and materials for teaching anthropology, and to inform teachers and anthropologists alike of the resources available to them in the D.C. metropolitan area. We welcome your suggestions of new books, films, curricula materials, and classroom activities for teaching anthropology or integrating it into science and social studies classes. Teachers have been important contributors to Anthro·Notes, and we would like to encourage and continue this communication by hearing from you.
