

Freshkills Park Alliance Virtual Education Programming Options

Thank you for your interest in virtual education at Freshkills Park! Our virtual education programming focuses on sustainability, waste management, grassland and wetland ecology, park development, and environmental restoration. If you would like an education opportunity that is not on this list, please contact Rachel at aronson@freshkillspark.org.

Note: Because of limited WiFi bandwidth at the park and the desire to prioritize interaction and discussion, these field trips are not conducted from the park, but do include highly interactive video, images, audio, and 360-degree imagery. Specific sessions are dependent on availability.

[Schedule a Virtual Field Trip](#)

Early Elementary (K-2)

1. *Trash and Sustainability (30 minutes)*: What happens to my trash after I throw it away? Students will learn the story of trash, from sanitation truck to landfill, and explore the idea that there is no such place as “away”. They will also brainstorm ways to reduce the amount of trash they throw away. Students are asked to bring a piece of trash or recycling for an interactive activity.
2. *Wetland Superpowers (30 minutes)*: People used to think that wetlands were muddy swamps full of bugs. But wetlands are actually a special ecosystem that protect people, plants, and animals! In this field trip, students will learn about wetland superpowers and conduct a home-friendly science experiment showing that wetlands protect inland communities. Students will also meet some of the plants and animals that call wetlands home.

Upper Elementary (3-5)

1. *Nature Journaling: Wetland Adaptations (30-45 minutes)*: How do animals that live in wetlands get the food, water, and shelter that they need to survive? In this virtual trip, students will meet two birds that live in wetlands, the Osprey and the Great Egret. Students will participate in a nature journaling activity to observe these animals and explain how the animal’s adaptations help them survive in their habitat.
2. *Nature Journaling: Grassland Adaptations (30-45 minutes)*: Grasslands are the most endangered habitat in the world, and home to some very special birds! In this virtual trip, students will learn about the unique habitat at the Freshkills Park grasslands and two of the birds that live there, the Grasshopper Sparrow and the Bobolink. They will use nature journaling to observe some of the behaviors that make grassland birds unique, including building nests in the ground and long migrations. Students will be able to explain why grassland birds are unique and how their adaptations help them survive in this environment.

3. *Park Planner (30-45 minutes)*: Parks are an important part of our communities and neighborhoods. Freshkills Park is still being built, and will be the biggest park New York City has built in over 100 years! In this trip, students will consider the different people who use parks and how to design a park that meets diverse needs. The class will participate in a mapping activity to design the park for everyone! Student ideas are brought back to Freshkills Park planners and designers and may be incorporated into the final design.

Middle School (6-8)

1. *Nature Journaling in the Wetlands (45 minutes)* How do animals that live in wetlands get the food, water, and shelter that they need to survive? In this virtual trip, students will meet two birds that live in wetlands, the Osprey and the Great Egret. Students will participate in a nature journaling activity to observe these animals and explain how the animal's adaptations help them survive in their habitat.
2. *The Wetland Food Web (30-45 minutes)* How are the plants and animals that live in wetlands connected to one another? In this virtual trip, students will meet birds, fish, and plants of the Freshkills Wetlands and explore why and how each species is adapted to live in a wetland habitat. Students will participate in an interactive activity creating a "wetland food web" mapping the connections between species.
3. *The Grassland Food Web (30-45 minutes)* How are the plants and animals that live in grasslands connected to one another? In this virtual trip, students will meet birds, insects, mammals, and plants of the Freshkills grassland and explore why and how each species is adapted to live in a grassland habitat. Students will participate in an interactive activity creating a "grassland food web" mapping the connections between species.
4. *Park Planner (30-45 minutes)*: Parks are an important part of our communities and neighborhoods. Freshkills Park is still being built, and will be the biggest park New York City has built in over 100 years! In this trip, students will consider the different people who use parks and how to design a park that meets diverse needs. The class will participate in a mapping activity to design the park for everyone! Student ideas are brought back to Freshkills Park planners and designers and may be incorporated into the final design.

High School (9-12; works well with Living Environment and Environmental Studies core classes and electives)

1. *What should we do with our trash? (Two 30-minute sessions)*: Managing municipal solid waste (MSW) is one of the most complex and important environmental challenges we face. The former Fresh Kills Landfill, once the largest landfill in the world, is a case study in changes of solid waste management over time. The first session will include a 20 minute presentation, with time for Q and A, about the history of the Fresh Kills landfill and its transformation into a park. After the first session, students will complete an asynchronous guided group research project using Google Slides to investigate major approaches to solid waste management: landfills, waste-to-energy plants, shooting into

space, recycling, and reducing. In the second session, students will share out the results of their research and discuss the complications of reducing waste.

2. *The Plastic Pollution Problem (Two 30-minute sessions or one 1.5 hour session with breakout group)*: Single-use plastics are a persistent environmental problem, but there are very different ideas about how to reduce their use. The first session will include a 20 minute presentation, with time for Q and A, about the history of the Fresh Kills landfill and the role of single-use plastics in waste management. After the first session, students will complete an asynchronous guided group research project using Google Slides to investigate different approaches to reducing plastic waste: legislation, recycling, scientific innovation, and behavior change. In the second session, students will share out the results of their research and discuss potential solutions to the environmental and social impact of single-use plastics.
3. *Welcome to Freshkills Park (45 min-1 hour)*: Freshkills Park, the largest landfill-to-park transformation in the world, is a case study in environmental transformation. For 53 years, millions of tons of New Yorker's trash went to Fresh Kills Landfill. Since then, the landscape has been transformed into a healthy ecosystem and a center for scientific research, art, and urban planning. This presentation offers a behind-the-scenes look at Freshkills Park history, landfill engineering, plants and animals, and more. Presentation lasts about 40 minutes, with time for discussion and Q&A.

Higher Education and Community Groups

1. *Introduction to Freshkills Park (1 hour)*: Freshkills Park, the largest landfill-to-park transformation in the world, is a case study in environmental transformation. For 53 years, millions of tons of New Yorker's trash went to Fresh Kills Landfill. Since then, the landscape has been transformed into a healthy ecosystem and a center for scientific research, art, and urban planning. This presentation offers a behind-the-scenes look at Freshkills Park history, landfill engineering, plants and animals, and more. Presentation lasts about 40 minutes, with time for discussion and Q&A.
2. *Ecology and Restoration at Freshkills Park (1 hour)*: Freshkills Park is a human-created natural system. Since the closure of the Fresh Kills Landfill, the area has been restored as a healthy grassland, wetland, and woodland ecosystem. This presentation will share research about the regeneration of ecosystems at Freshkills, and consider the environmental implications of reclaiming a destroyed landscape. Presentation lasts about 40 minutes, with time for discussion and Q&A.

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