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The objectives of Schoolmasters is to provide students multiple learning experiences throughout a given time period using the fun, exciting and hands-on sport of fishing while educating them with science, literacy, math, history, social studies and safe ethical angling practices as well as encouraging them to become stewards of the environment.

This program can be done with a large number of students using a station rotation layout, or can be taught by one individual to the entire group classroom style. If done as station rotations, allow about 15 minutes for each rotation. This can teach the basics quickly and works well if you want to get a large number of participants through (not as in-depth). Keep in mind if this is done in stations, volunteers (volunteers should have a basic understanding of fishing, however, a brief lesson the day before, or early the morning of depending on their station could be sufficient) are needed to run the various stations. If the program is going to be done over time for a small group/class (up to about 30 participants), then it would either be best to break it up over a period of different classes/courses/events (anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour sessions).

The various topics that are covered include:

Ethical Angling
Habitat Awareness
History of Fishing
Introduction to Equipment
Casting
Knot Tying
Cast Netting

Ethical Angling and Habitat Awareness Session/Station: Here, anglers are taught the importance of becoming ethical anglers. Not just following the rules and regulations, but how also to be aware of the habitats in which they fish as well as the other anglers around them. In order to be a successful angler, one must be aware of the fish they are trying to catch (targeting). For example, one wouldn't use a ballyhoo to catch a largemouth bass. One also wouldn't cast out into the middle of a pond where it is deep without much vegetation, they would fish near the shore where there is plenty of shelter. By understanding some simple biology, ecology and ethics, participants can become great anglers.

This session/station will show anglers proper methods for:

- Catch and release using a dehooker
- The importance of using circle hooks versus J hooks
- The importance of "leave no trace", properly disposing of old equipment, and recycling monofilament
- State, federal and/or local rules and regulations
- How to properly measure a fish to determine if it is legal size to keep
- Understanding "limit your take, don't take your limit"
- Species identification
- "Match the hatch" (matching real insects to their lures)
- "Where can I catch...?" (matching fish to their ecosystems and habitats)

History of Fishing and Introduction to Equipment Session/Station: Here, anglers learn some basic history including when fishing was first recorded, what equipment was first used and why people fish(ed). Anglers will get to look at and learn the different types of equipment that is needed to do different types of fishing. One would not use a conventional rod and reel combo to catch bluegill, would they?

This session/station will teach anglers:

- A simple history lesson on fishing (asking anglers what would/could have been used for various fishing equipment before all the man made equipment)
- The various types of fishing equipment needed to do the different types of fishing (including freshwater, saltwater, fly fishing, nearshore, offshore, etc.)
- “What can I use to catch...?” (matching equipment together in order to catch certain fish)

Casting Session/Station: Here, anglers will learn techniques to properly cast their lines or lures depending on the environment in which they are fishing. One can’t always use overhead casting (what if there is a tree above?), so flip and sidearm techniques can come in handy! Besides using bait-casters, open- and closed-faced combos, anglers can also try their hand at fly casting at various targets. For anglers that can already cast using various methods, they can practice to perfect their skills and to become more accurate.

This session/station will teach and help anglers:

- How to use either closed-faced, open-faced and bait-caster combos
- How to cast overhead, sidearm and to flip their bait/lures
- How to fly cast
- Aim at the targets
- SAFETY

Knot Tying Session/Station: Here, anglers will learn how to tie various knots to attach their hooks and lures to the end of their line as well as how to tie together two lines of equal or different sizes. Tying a good knot is essential to catching a fish. If a knot is tied improperly, one could lose the biggest fish they ever caught, or have a great story about “the one that got away”. Worst yet, one may lose their favorite lure and unfortunately add the fishing gear lost in the water (see ethical angling!).

This session/station will teach and help anglers:

- Tie various types of fishing knots
- Understand which knots to use for different fishing situations

Cast Netting Session/Station: Here, anglers will learn how to throw a cast net in order to catch their own bait. When saltwater fishing, bait can get expensive, besides, it is much more satisfying to catch a big fish with bait you caught yourself. Also, there are days when fishing is more like boating or casting (that’s why it’s called fishing and not catching!) – so catching your bait may be the only fish you catch for the day.

This session/station will teach anglers:

- How to throw a cast net
- How to properly retrieve their bait
- How to keep their bait (live or dead)

For very in-depth background information and ideas for “scripts” to teach on some of these topics (and others not listed), Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) has a Passport for Fishing program. If you follow this link, it will take you to those documents: <http://www.rbff.org/page.cfm?pageID=94>.

If live fishing is to take place, many more volunteers are needed in order to help teach how to bait their hooks and bait hooks, fix equipment as they get tangled or lose tackle, keep participants safe and to release the fish.

If not doing the program in the classroom or a set location - In choosing a site, it is suggested that there be the following:

- Parking and handicap access
- Area large enough to accommodate the expected number of participants/stations
- Restroom facilities
- Open areas for casting and cast netting
- Food/space availability (if the participating organization wishes to provide food, or have food available, or an area in which participants can sit and eat their own food)
- Security/Safety – keeping in mind power lines, busy streets, weather conditions, crime, etc.
- Extras – be capable if accommodating any extra activities (vendors, demonstrations, etc.)

Some suggested additional sessions:

- (Optional) A local professional fishing captain, guide or celebrity as a guest speaker to cover the following topics, but not limited to:
 - Special skills or techniques
 - Identify local species at risk
 - Equipment use
 - Where to fish
 - How to fish in different conditions
 - Conservation tips
- After all lessons have been taught, take the students fishing! How?:
 - Do it yourself with your students at a local lake or pier with the help of parents/volunteers
 - Contract a local kid-friendly captain to oversee and lead a local field trip to a lake or pier
 - Contract an organization that does this sort program
 - Take the students on a head-boat (party boat) for the day
 - Encourage them to go on their own with their parents/friends