



BPFDs Assessment Tool Background and Development

School Districts want to know how Field Days prepare students to meet State and National Standards in science, math, and social studies, and STEM skills and objectives. Researchers have addressed “Best Practices” for environmental/stewardship education in extended classroom experiences (NAAEE, 1996; Carlson and Peters, 2001; Fortner, 2001; Siemer, 2004; McDonnell, 2004; Stevens and Andrews, 2006). Stevens and Andrews (2006) defined what constitutes “good,” “better,” or “best” in educational practices. “Best was defined as “a program or practice that has been clearly defined, refined through repeated delivery, and supported by substantial research” (Fedler, 2001, 7). Applying Best Practices to Field Days increases the likelihood that these programs will meet desired outcomes in science and environmental education.

This Assessment Tool targets coordinators (Cooperative Extension Educators/Agents) and presenters (natural resources professionals) who currently implement Field Days—ultimately increasing the impact of Minnesota’s and other state’s Field Days for thousands of 4th – 6th grade students. This tool will increase awareness about quality Field Days by comparing and contrasting current Field Day experiences against a list of best practices. The application of this tool will benefit students and teachers by closing the gap between Best Practices in Field Day Practice with future Field Day reality.

The BPFDs Assessment Tool was developed based on a review of the literature and is grounded in informal science education theory. A team of experts and practitioners synthesized their experiences and knowledge of literature to build this observation-based assessment. This team was employed to determine which educational characteristics need to be addressed for effective Field Days. Pilot testing was used to refine the tool at Field Days during spring 2007, fall 2007, and spring 2008.

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