

2024/2025 Dates:

Session 1: Thursday, April 3 - Saturday, April 5

Session 2: Sunday, April 6 - Tuesday, April 8

Experiential Learning for 9th Grade Freshman Orientation

- The two sessions of **Freshman Orientation** will take place during this time frame: Half of the class will camp and hike in the Wichita Mountains Thursday April 3 through Saturday April 5, and the other half of the class will participate in the Freshman Orientation program from Sunday, April 6, through Tuesday, April 8.
- Students should be dropped off at school between 6:45 a.m. and 7 a.m. the day they are to leave. They can be picked up around 3 p.m. the day they return. An update on their arrival should be sent out the day of their return.
- Freshman Orientation will be occurring during normal class times so your students will miss 2 days of school. Your students should speak with their teachers before the trip to find out what they need to do in preparation for their absence. Teachers are aware that students will be out for a school program, so the workload should be lighter.
- If your child is enrolled in a spring sport, we will plan their Freshman Orientation group according to their athletic schedule, there is no need to let us know what sport your child will be in, we are already aware of games and bye weeks. If your student is in a sport outside of HH, please let us know of conflicts if they exist.
- If you need to request a session for your child, please email Grace Weber at gweber@hollandhall.org as soon as possible, **by 3:10pm on Friday, March 7th, 2025**. Please keep in mind that we need to limit these requests to major family conflicts, such as attending a wedding, funeral, etc.
- All student medications and waivers must be handed in to either Jenna Alford at the front desk or Kathleen Alabbasi in the middle school nurse office **by 3:10pm on Monday, March 24th** Due to processing time, no late medications will be accepted.
- A Packing List and a list of Frequently Asked Questions are below.

Freshman Orientation: Clothing and Personal Gear List

Please follow this list. If you need to make substitutions, ask Mrs. Weber. Generally, bring as little as possible; do not consider yourself an exception. There will be no chance to buy what you forget to bring. Please note that all your gear except your sleeping bag, ground pad, and daypack needs to fit in a nylon bag, backpack, or some sort of duffel. Sleeping bag/ground pad should be packed together and separated from your other gear for packing convenience. **Each item should have your name on it.** You can buy cheap stuff sacks at the Army Surplus store or at Walmart for about \$10.

The weather will most likely be in the 60s or 70s during the day, with sunshine, but will be in the 40s and 50s overnight; therefore, a ground pad is very important to keep you warm. Also, remember that there might be wind and rain. Do not rely on one shirt and one pair of jeans to get you through. You need an extra pair of long pants. Even if it looks like it might be warm, bring an outer layer for your legs and

arms. This will help protect against sun burns, poison ivy, bugs and small brush. Lightweight nylon pants are our favorite for this trip as they offer a level of protection without added weight or heat, and dry very quickly when wet. Also bring layers for night time. It may be cold at night so I suggest you pack a few layers, just in case. I strongly suggest a sweatshirt, sweatpants, long johns, extra wool socks, a beanie wool cap and possibly gloves. Make sure you have enough warm clothing to layer up at night.

This time of year it is not very hot in the Wichitas, but it is still imperative that your students bring sun and heat protection, such as hats, sunscreen and bandanas. We require them to bring 64 ounces of water (2 32-ounce water bottles). Their day packs must be large enough to fit their water bottles, lunch, and any other items they wish to bring with them on the hikes. This means they need to bring a full-sized backpack with them, with proper shoulder padding.

I. **Clothing:**

- ☐ Hat or cap
- ☐ Wool hat or beanie
- ☐ 2 pairs of shorts, 2-3 pairs of long pants. Jeans are *least* desirable, nylon or other synthetic is best. 1 pair of sweatpants for night time is ideal.
- ☐ 3 T-shirts, a long sleeved shirt, sweatshirt and possibly a coat.
- ☐ Raingear (the cheap stuffable “frogg toggs” sold at Academy are a great value).
- ☐ Sneakers in GOOD shape, or hiking boots **with rubber soles**. (Boots or shoes *must be well broken-in*). **NO SLIP ON or OPEN-TOE SHOES OF ANY KIND. Please avoid the style of cross trainers with the slotted soles. These slip very easily on wet rock.**
- ☐ 3-5 pairs of socks (wool is best).

II. **Sleeping Gear**

- ☐ Sleeping bag
- ☐ **No pillow. We will leave it on the curb if students try to bring one.** There is simply no room. If it rains, they become sponges. Students can use clothing or a sleeping bag sack stuffed with clothing as a pillow. We find this works very well.
- ☐ Ground pad of some sort. (**No air mattresses!** Rule of thumb: if it is bigger than your sleeping bag, it is probably too big. Yoga mats work well if a sleeping pad can not be acquired.)

III. **Personal Gear**

- ☐ Cup, bowl and spoon/fork/butter knife (sturdy, non-breakable) **DO NOT FORGET THIS.**
- ☐ **Two 32oz. Water-bottles OR a 64+ oz. hydropack** (high-quality, must not leak, no plastic water bottles-they are too flimsy and lids get lost. Think Nalgene bottle, Camelbak bottle, Klean Kanteen, etc.) - **CONSIDER BRINGING MORE WATER BOTTLES IF YOU HAVE THEM.**
- ☐ Small ziplock bag for toiletries. Do not bring lots of toiletries. All you really need is a toothbrush, toothpaste, hair ties (for long hair), hair brush, and you can bring a small bottle of hand sanitizer if you wish. Some of you may wish to bring deodorant and face wipes to stay fresh, and that is fine as long as you make sure you dispose of the refuse in

a proper manner on trail. We want to make a minimal impact on the environment while we are there.

- ☐ Small Flashlight or headlamp - **WITH BATTERIES**
- ☐ Small washcloth or bandanna
- ☐ Insect Repellent
- ☐ SUNSCREEN!
- ☐ **\$20-30 for lunch on the road back from camp**
- ☐ A daypack to carry your water-bottle, lunch, and incidentals during the day (your hands **MUST** be free when hiking). Don't bring a full framed backpacking pack. It is too big and unwieldy. Also do not bring a small backpack that can't carry your water bottle and personal items. The backpacks with rope/string straps will hurt your shoulders all day, so make sure your pack has strong/supportive straps.
- ☐ **Small** Pocket knife (*optional*) for slicing cheese or fruit during hikes. I recommend inexpensive, quality folding knives like the Mini Buck. ***NO Large knives allowed. I will leave it behind at school if I deem it too large or unsafe. NO FIXED BLADES.***

MEDICINE: Ibuprofen, Acetaminophen, and Benadryl will be provided, if needed. For your child to receive any of these, prior authorization must be given on their annual forms (on the parent portal). Any other over the counter medications and/or any prescription medications needed are to be turned in to Kathleen Alabbasi or Jenna Alford, by **Monday, March 24**. Please complete the [Medication Authorization for Freshman Orientation](#) form and return it with the medications in their original containers, with only the amount required for the trip. If your student has medical or religious dietary requirements that we need to know about please email Grace Weber at gweber@hollandhall.org by the same date. Medication will be dispensed by HH Faculty. No student will be permitted to have any medication in his/her possession with the exception of rescue inhalers, epi pens, or other personal medical equipment. ANY QUESTIONS MUST BE DIRECTED TO THE SCHOOL NURSE at kalabbasi@hollandhall.org

THESE ITEMS MUST BE LEFT AT HOME: Rings, bracelets, or dangling earrings. Shampoo (there will be no extra water for this). Pillows or blankets! Personal food—this includes candy, gum and other snacks. Phones, games, radios, iPods, airpods, cards, etc. No books, magazines, *even school books*. Weapons, large knives, hatchets, whips, etc. Tobacco, alcohol or other drugs, or anything else that might get you in BIG trouble if you were to bring it to school.

Freshman Orientation FAQs

Q: You said not to even bring school books on the trip, what's up with that?

A: This trip is not an extracurricular activity like a sports trip or an arts festival. We would expect students to bring along some work to do on the bus on those occasions and possibly even do work in the hotel. Freshman Orientation (FO) is part of the Upper School "Curriculum" and as such, its learning objectives are very specific. Just as you would not allow a student to sit in an Algebra class working feverishly on their French homework, we do not want the learning dynamic of FO to be compromised. Teachers are very understanding and flexible about this time. Everyone knows and everyone goes. This time away

from academics will not keep a student from reaching any academic pinnacle. Plus, the books might get damaged, lost or trampled by a buffalo and then what?

Q: My child has _____ allergies to _____ type of food. Can they bring their own food?

A: In general, no. We know that we have several kids each year with certain allergies (nuts especially) and we have provisions for them. We also know that several students are vegetarians or vegans and we have enough good veggie food filled with proteins for them as well. **DO NOT SEND FOOD WITH THEM.** Here is why: 1. It raises their status above their peers, which is fundamentally part of what we are trying to combat on FO. 2. Raccoons WILL FIND IT. If, for medical reasons, you need to send a certain dietary supplement or you have some very specific questions on this matter, please call or e-mail Ms. Weber or Mrs. Alabbasi and we may be able to accommodate your child's needs.

Q: My child is having a Slumber Party on the Saturday before the first group, can I switch them to the second group?

A: The group placement is not very fluid. MOST of the students are locked into one group or another by way of sports commitments. Most of the rest of the students are "forced" into a group to balance out numbers (overall and according to gender self-identification). We can't just switch a student from one group to another without finding a student (of the same self-identified gender) to switch back the other way. We have placed kids in certain groups based on many factors and after groups have been assigned, it is too late to make changes, other than for VERY SERIOUS conflicts.

Q: What is the MOST IMPORTANT piece of equipment they need to bring?

A: Quality shoes and quality socks and 2 quality water bottles. Don't go out and buy \$200 hiking boots. If they have some GOOD, solid athletic shoes, with ankle support, that will be great. If they DON'T have good quality shoes, then yes, you should probably buy them some good shoes that can stand up to the rigors of hiking. **IF you are going to do this, get them NOW and make sure they are walking around in them regularly for at least a week before we go, to avoid blisters and foot pain.** Water bottles should have a good seal to avoid leaking and be made of aluminum or sturdy plastic, cheap plastic water bottles (Dasani, Ozarka, etc.) are not sturdy enough to stand up to the environment of this trip.

Q: What if our family is unable to provide all the materials needed?

A: That is totally ok! We have a storage of extra sleeping bags, water bottles, shoes, etc. If you and your student need help acquiring any of the items above, feel free to reach out to Ms. Weber and she will help accommodate your students' needs. The sooner you reach out, the better, so that we can ensure your student get what they need in time for the trip.

Q: What happens if there is an emergency?

A: We are just a few minutes from Lawton, OK where there is a very fine Emergency Room in the hospital there. In the last decade of FO, it has only been used once (by a former faculty leader). Likewise, we take 6 GPS messengers on the trip (one for each adult) in case of emergencies, which we have thankfully never had to use except to contact each other. Also each patrol is outfitted with a full field first aid kit and the faculty and student leaders are either CPR certified or have attended a small training session with Nurse Alabbasi. If an emergency does occur, be it medical or behavioral, you will be required to come pick your student up in Lawton, OK. If there is a weather related emergency, we are connected with the local high school in Cache, OK and they have a storm shelter in their gymnasium we are able to get to in less than 20 minutes. If the weather looks to be bad and we see that we have lots of time before it hits, there is a chance we will head back to school early, and you will be notified with at least 4 hours notice. We will stay at school with the students until everyone is able to be picked up.