Virtual Learning Pods
Frequently Asked Questions

General Questions

What are Zoo Knoxville Virtual Learning Pods?

- Zoo Knoxville is providing students the space and supervision needed to complete their virtual learning lessons. Your students will be supervised by educators with over twenty-two years of combined experience, who will be available for troubleshooting, enrichment, and assistance.
- We will be hosting a small group of twenty students in our pods program to encourage social distancing, while also giving your student opportunity for interactions with their peers.
- Zoo Knoxville provides a unique setting for this program, covering 52 acres, a variety of indoor and outdoor exhibits, and over 800 different animals from around the world.

Does this program last for the whole school year?

- We are currently only registering programs for the fall season, due to uncertainty about the state of schools in the region. If there is a need, we are considering opening up a program for the spring as well.

Who is able to attend this program?

- We are accepting 1st-3rd grade students that are engaged in a virtual learning option in an area school district. Please be aware that while we allow other school districts, we will be operating under the Knox County School District schedule for holidays and school days, including school closings due to weather, etc.
- Our staff is not licensed as special education teachers. We may be able to make some modifications dependent on your student’s needs, but we will not be able to provide one-on-one help throughout the day. Due to limited space and social distancing requirements, we are not able to allow parents to attend with a student. If your student has special needs, please contact your school district for special education services.
needs, please contact ZKSchool@zooknoxville.org before registering so we can evaluate and determine if the program will work well for your student.

- Please note that this program is not intended for students that are being homeschooled independently of local school systems. If you are looking for homeschool lessons led by Zoo Knoxville, please see our website at https://www.zooknoxville.org/homeschool-programs/

**What will the program structure look like?**

- Students will be provided with a socially distant workspace inside of a climate controlled room on zoo grounds. This room will not be accessible to the public.
- Throughout the day, students will have the opportunity to pause their virtual learning to take part in various “enrichment” activities, such as exploring the zoo, fun and engaging STEM activities and meeting animal ambassadors.
- Students will need to be able to work independently, and self-manage the tasks they have to complete. Zoo Education Department staff will be available at a minimum of a 1:10 ratio to assist, but may not always be immediately available if they are helping other students. This program may not be appropriate for students who have difficulty with working independently, keeping an appropriate indoor volume, being around strangers (such as students from other schools), interacting with their peers, or other unique educational needs.

**What times does the program run?**

- Drop off: 7:30 – 7:45am
- Student preparation (settling in/logging in): 7:45 – 8:00am
- Virtual learning time begins: 8:00am
- Lunch and brain breaks will vary depending on each student’s needs and schedule.
- Virtual learning time ends: 2:30pm
- Wrap up, disconnect and pack up: 2:30 – 2:45pm
- Pickup 2:45 – 3:00pm
- Aftercare may be available from 3:00 – 5:30pm, depending on enrollment. You must be enrolled in Virtual Learning Pods to attend aftercare.

**Will my child have to wear a mask?**

- Yes, staff and students will be required to wear a mask when not able to socially distance. When students are at their designated work spaces, they will not be required to wear a mask since they will be appropriately socially distant. If a student leaves the work station, a mask must be worn. (ex: bathroom breaks, stretch breaks, enrichment activities.) We recommend packing an extra mask just in case.
What does my student need to bring to participate?

- Device (laptop, chromebook, mac, etc) and associated power cord/charger to do their online learning
- Headphones or earbuds to listen to lessons without disturbing other students.
- Backpack
- Lunch and snacks
- Water bottle
- An extra layer in case the student is cool in the classroom
- Raincoat and warm layers appropriate for the weather. Students may be outside for 30 minutes at a time during pickup, drop off, and enrichment activities.
- All supplies required to do the day’s lessons such as:
  - Notebook
  - Pens/Pencils
  - Color pencils or crayons
  - Printed materials
  - Scissors
  - Glue Sticks
  - Extra erasers
  - We do not provide these materials due to concerns about sanitization and exposure.
- 2 masks
- (Optional) Items for independent breaks between enrichment and virtual learning (i.e. book to read, color books, quiet items of play). Please do not send your students with electronic video game devices. Cell phones may not be used during the school day.

Does the zoo provide lunches or snacks?

- No, due to the wide variety of dietary restrictions and personal preferences on food at this age, we are unable to provide lunches or snacks for participants.
- In the case of a student with severe allergies, students may be asked to modify their lunch choices in the interests of safety.

Will the zoo be offering tutoring or instruction for school work?

- Your student’s instruction will come from the school teachers or school system where they are enrolled. We will assist your student with further explanation of lessons as needed and help your student stay on task so they don’t get behind in their lessons.
• We are not responsible for completion of lessons, but we will communicate with parents as needed if a student is struggling.

Safety

What safety measures have been put in place for my student’s safety?

• Our number one concern is the safety of your students. We have established the following policies to help keep your students safe and healthy:
  o Daily screening of students and staff
  o All students and staff wearing masks
  o Social distancing practices
  o Easy access to sanitizing options
  o Daily cleaning and disinfecting procedures

Will students be exposed to the general public?

• Some of our enrichment options do involve us going out in the zoo when the general public will have access. In this case, we will follow all social distancing guidelines as we traverse the zoo.

Other

Will my child be able to visit the zoo between virtual learning lessons?

• Yes! We plan to offer a variety of enrichment opportunities to the students. An exact schedule of options is not currently available due to the variability of each student’s schedules.

What kind of enrichment activities might there be for my student?

• Guided tours in the zoo
• Animal encounters and keeper chats
• Games at our field station
• Quiet spaces for resting or reading
• STEM experiments

What if we wish to leave the program? Can we get a refund?

• Due to limited capacity, written refund requests must be submitted in writing or via email to zkschool@zooknoxville.org to the attention of the School Education Coordinator. Refund requests received at least 30 days in advance will receive a full refund. Fees for
refund requests made less than 30 days in advance will not be refunded except for days missed due to COVID-19 related symptoms, exposure or illness.

Are there any scholarship options?

- Unfortunately, we are not able to offer scholarships at this time.

Will you allow drop-ins?

- Students must register in advance on a month by month basis. Currently we are accepting registrations through the month of December.
- If there is space to register your student, we will require at least one full weekday before your student will be allowed to attend the program. This is to ensure that we have all appropriate paperwork and information regarding your student.

If schools go 100% virtual midway through the year, will this program be available to those who did not register initially?

- Registration would depend on space available. We are setting limits on registration to ensure appropriate social distancing.

For any other questions, please contact the School Education Coordinator at zkkschool@zooknoxville.org.

We hope to see you soon!