

All About Pods

Pods are mixed age interest groups (Kindergarten through Intermediate) where children can explore a common interest in depth. Students choose from approximately twenty topics that incorporate the multiple intelligence areas, including Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Visual/Spatial, Musical, Bodily/Kinesthetic, Mathematical/Logical, Verbal/Linguistic, and Naturalistic.

Why are Pods important to the Sojourner program?

Dr. Howard Gardner says that our schools and culture focus most of their attention on linguistic and logical/mathematical intelligence. We esteem the highly articulate or logical people of our culture. However, Dr. Howard Gardner says that we should also place equal attention on individuals who show gifts in the other intelligences: the artists, architects, musicians, naturalists, designers, dancers, therapists, entrepreneurs and others who enrich the world in which we live. Pods also give children the power of choice, which is an important part of the Sojourner program.

What is the time commitment for Pods?

They are held for 45 minutes, two days weekly over the course of three sessions (fall, winter, and spring) and last from eight to ten weeks. Currently they are being held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:40am to 9:25am. We need a minimum of 9 parent-run Pods each session to make the program function.

Why do parents need to help?

The optimal size for a class would be 10 or less. Pods are only effective when done in small groups and offered in a wide range of topics. Without parents, class sizes would be around 20-25 students. Parents also bring exciting expertise in a wide range of occupations, hobbies and interests that differ from our staff.

Does it have to be a parent teaching a Pod?

Sojourner welcomes our entire community to participate in Pods. We welcome grandparents, neighbors and friends who would like to share a special interest. Following the districts guidelines for volunteering in the classroom, each individual would need to fill out the appropriate paperwork and background checks ahead of time.

What if I can only help one day?

Volunteers can share a Pod. Some Pods are shared by up to three parents to accommodate busy schedules. You can formulate a plan with fellow parents to organize a Pod, or contact Mrs. Wear or the PTA to find out if there are Pods already planned that just need extra help. In the event of a shortage of Pod leaders the PTA will facilitate a brainstorming session for parents to collaborate and create teams.

Tips for Teaching a Pod

- **Students will range in ages from Kindergarten through Fifth Grade.** Try to plan lessons that will work for a diverse range of ages.
- **Choose something that you have interest in.** Children pick up on your enthusiasm!
- **Supplies from the school can be used (kiln, sports equipment, instruments).** Arrangements to borrow sports equipment can be made directly with [Mr. McGowan](#), or contact [Mrs. Wear](#) for assistance in other areas.
- **Classes can be held inside or outside.**
- **Children can help direct where learning can lead.** Understand that your plans may adapt to the interests of the students you are teaching.
- **When you are planning, keep it simple.** There is a small amount of time to prep, instruct and clean up. It goes quickly!
- **It's ok to ask for help!** You can teach a pod in cooperation with another parent if that works best for your schedule. And if you find yourself unable to make a pod day (we all get sick sometimes!), Facebook is a great way to ask for support.

What do I need to include for a description of my Pod?

- Consider physical requirements such as running, sitting still for long periods, fine motor skills.
- Which intelligences will be used for the Pod? What do you hope students to learn?
- Make it sound as fun and interesting as possible. These kids usually have many great options available; so really “sell” your Pod!

How do I get started?

1. Start brainstorming ideas of what interests or talents you would like to share.
2. Fill out the [volunteer paperwork](#) and a [background check](#).
3. Attend a volunteer training session or contact the PTA Volunteer Coordinator to arrange a meeting.
4. Contact [Mrs. Wear](#) to notify her of your Pod choice and description.
5. Make arrangements with Mrs. Wear for supplies and appropriate setting for your Pod.
6. Collect supplies and create a calendar of activities for the Pod.
7. Check in to Helpcounter and get a volunteer badge in the front office each Pod day. Have fun!