

National Park Service Helps Teachers Make Learning Fun & Relevant



Back to School – in America's National Parks

The National Park Service (NPS) launched a new online service for teachers that brings America's national parks, including New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park, into neighborhood classrooms. The new "Teachers" section of the National Park Service website at www.nps.gov/teachers provides a one-stop shop for curriculum-based lesson plans, traveling trunks, maps, activities, distance learning, and other resources. All of the materials draw from the spectacular natural landscapes and authentic places preserved in America's national parks.

"New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park has long welcomed New Bedford area students to the park for field trips," said Jen Nersesian, superintendent of New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park. "Creating richer learning connections for students across the nation, in a consistent, easy to use format is exciting. I invite all educators to take

a moment to visit and bookmark the new “Teachers” section of the National Park Service website. A quick search opens up the resources of the entire National Park System at your fingertips, which includes a variety of lesson plans, traveling trunks, virtual field trips, online ranger chats, and field trips from 401 national parks. “

Locally, the core curriculum aligned lesson plan “Whales and World” features immersive activities that encourage students to explore the concepts of sustainability and conservation. Existing lesson plans on whaling, New Bedford history and the Underground Railroad are being realigned with core curriculum for inclusion on the new website. Teachers will find that the plans are flexible; they can be offered as supplements to a planned field trip, or as a complete classroom based experience.

The site is searchable by location, keyword, and more than 125 subjects, from archaeology, to biology, to Constitutional law. Teachers will, for the first time, be able to rate NPS-provided content. In addition to park-created content, the site also features educational materials created by NPS national programs like the National Register of Historic Places and its award-winning Teaching with Historic Places series of 147 lesson plans.

The website is just one part of the National Park Service’s ongoing commitment to education. Every year, national parks offer more than 57,000 educational programs that serve nearly 3 million students in addition to 563,000 interpretive programs attended by 12.6 million visitors. The NPS is working with partners and educational institutions to expand programs and encourage the use of parks as places of learning. The NPS has partnered with the Department of Education to integrate national park resources into core curricula. Each summer, teachers across the country are hired to work in parks to develop curriculum-based programs based on park resources through the Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program.

To learn more about the National Park Service's education programs, visit www.nps.gov/teachers.
