

What We Learned

Away But Home students and faculty reflected on what they learned during their 2011 summer expedition throughout New England. Below are some of their thoughts.

Nyrobi (pilot student)

At The Field Academy I was always reminded that there is a bigger world out there, and while I am living in my own world someone else is living in theirs and in a completely different way. At The Field Academy I got to peek inside the world of lobstermen, the Penobscot, Appalachian Trail hikers, farmers, and city-dwellers. I gained so much insight into the vastly different ways people perceive the world around them. All of this has inspired me to continue to travel and learn more."

Laura (pilot student)

"This summer I learned things that influence and fuel my ongoing sense of wonder and responsibility to the world. More specifically I learned that my role as an American is to fight for social justice. I learned that although I identify more with my ethnicity than with my nationality my home and the people I interact with mold who I am. Being American gives me the flexibility to do with my identity as I wish. I will never look at education the same after The Field Academy. Blurring the line between living and learning made me realize how precious every moment of my life is and how thankful I should be for the people I meet at the places I go."

Jaxson (pilot student)

"The Field Academy blew me away. It was like no educational experience I'd ever had before; the Academy reignited and encouraged my natural desire to learn. While I've always been a proponent of experiential learning, I've never had such genuine education outside the classroom. There's something different about being there – in a place, where something happened or is happening. Whether you're learning history, art, politics, economics... it doesn't matter, because learning in the field has no alternative. It is important to be there. And I've extended that philosophy, of really being there, into every other aspect of my life – I truly learn, laugh, play, and live in the moment... What I really learned from the Field Academy is the importance of real, genuine human connection, and its enduring power to transform lives, resolve conflicts, and ultimately, make life and learning indistinguishable. Thank you, Field Academy."

Zach (pilot student)

"This summer I learned one of the most important lessons of all. Regardless of who you are and where you come from you can come together to form an amazing community!"

Emma Raine (pilot student)

"This summer I was blessed with a gift that keeps giving. I learned the unparalleled value in living and learning in a coed program as a high school student. The work we did together at the Field Academy Pilot Program was humanizing on every level known to me, and this atmosphere we created together deterred the attention from the fronts that young people so often put up, making it effortless to explore alternative, unique forms of emotional and social intimacy. The initial visceral perspective that every new person was a potential date dissolved, and authentic friendships evolved. Yes, I learned of the power of gonzo journalism, the mystique of geological impact on the ecology of the Green Mountains, and the spiritually requited love of the Penobscot people to the land; and I learned that building meaningful

multi-gender and multi-generational relationships is no more futile to become enveloped in than my academic experiences.”

Gabi (pilot student)

“While I did learn how to tell an anti-joke at the Field Academy, I also learned about the importance of engaging with your community, and the people who live in it. I have always felt that engaging with people is one of the most important parts of our shared human experience, but I have most NOT always felt 100% confident about talking to people. However, this summer I learned that everybody has a story, and most of the time, they would be happy to share it with you, and these shared stories give people common ground. I am also an ENORMOUS fan of circles (which I learned quite a bit about), but I think that's a story for another day. :)”

Amalia (pilot student)

“This summer I learned that passion can change the world. On our adventures, whatever they may be, there was always a driving force, a motivating energy that lifted us all. Everyone became their own on the trip, discovering the little things that make them smile - for me: art, photography, trust in friendship, and the spontaneity of out-of-the blue adventures to name a few out of countless. From the passion in learning and living with dedication and enthusiasm whether it to become a famous musician, chef, teacher, artist or a great listener, I learned that the love in trying, and fighting for a goal is one of the strongest motivators of all.”

Amber (pilot student)

“Where do I begin? I learned:

- *Responsibility*
- *Peacemaking*
- *Mental strength*
- *... Physical strength*
- *Speech skills*
- *Transportation skills*
- *Surviving in the wild 101*
- *The definition of community, citizen, and citizenship (well, I am still trying to figure this one out)*

Well, the point is that I've learned so much it's endless. This list goes on forever, and I learned all of these things from everyone who was part of the Field academy, even the nice people who stopped to talk to us. I remember coming back home from The Field Academy and being sad that our time together had come to an end, but being grateful that I had met everyone that I did. It made me excited to share all my knowledge that I gained from The Field Academy with my friends and family. OH and I almost forgot, the most important thing that I learned at the Field Academy is that you can never stop learning.”

Christine (pilot student)

“I remember that one day in Burlington, Vermont and we were all making pasta at Claire & Philip's house. I don't remember exactly what happened but some of us were feeling down and the aura of the house became really uncomfortable. Claire & Jen decided to show us how to VOEmP, with their demonstration with an issue of theirs, which was equally as uncomfortable as the situation. The VOEmPing at the end really helped and I remember that's how everyone resolved their issues for the rest of the trip. It was so direct, and non-offensive, I wish everyone knew how to VOEmP! :] Go Field Academy for resolving difficult situations!”

Paddy Foran (guest faculty)

“Witnessing the development of the Field Academy and seeing it come to life this summer, I learned that affecting tangible change is truly possible. In the short week I spent backpacking in the White Mountains of New Hampshire with the Field Academy this summer, I was reminded of the possibility and hope for the future. The passion and brilliance of motivated teenagers guided by talented and committed educators can only result in something amazing!”

Jenna Wilson (summer intern)

“This summer I learned the importance of understanding different perspectives. I learned how to hip-hop dance, and through that process I learned how to laugh at myself. But most importantly, I learned how to make connections with wonderfully funny and intelligent students, inspiring teachers, and (friendly) strangers we met along the way, and that when you form a community you can have a great impact on each other and on other communities.”

Claire Hirschmann (founder & teacher)

“I learned that catching a sheep is laughably difficult. I learned that the idea of citizenship can have multiple definitions, elicit passionate responses, and inspire remarkable imagination. I learned that lobsters carry their hearts on their backs and their spines along their bellies. I learned that bringing together a group of students from all over the country, from drastically different backgrounds, is one of the most brilliant and powerful ways to have those students consider who they are and what comprises the country in which they live. I learned that there is only one parking lot in Harvard Square that will fit a 15-passenger van. I learned that it is possible to turn an idea into a reality, and that process is made infinitely better when students are part of it.”

Jen Lazar (founder & teacher)

“This summer I witnessed how powerful it is to transition from a rural to an urban landscape (and back again). Standing in front of the map of the subway system in Boston talking about the development of public transportation in the city I heard someone wonder aloud “what would this would look like in Craftsbury, Vermont...” At that moment I felt an incredible sense of possibility for what the Field Academy can accomplish by bringing our studies to these very different corners of the United States.”

Claire Samuel (guest faculty)

*“The weeks I spent with the Field Academy this summer taught me
...that feeding 15 people 3 meals everyday is a beauty and a challenge
...that I am a teacher and a student always AND simultaneously
...that we all dance and sing in our own ways, at our own times
...that especially when spent with a posse of thoughtful and eager folk, time is quick and full and precious.”*

Heather Foran (founder & teacher)

“This summer I learned that we need to pair local, community-based action in the places where we're from with a national/global conversation. Without the first we lack grounding, without the second, we lack perspective. And I learned that when you ask students what they want with their education they can tell you EXACTLY what it looks like.”