

# **Memorandum of Understanding**

## **Between the Brantley County Board of Education and The Okefenokee Swamp Park, Inc. Waycross, Georgia**

### **1. PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to implement a cooperative effort between the Brantley COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION (BCBOE) and the OKEFENOKEE SWAMP PARK, Inc, (OSP) Waycross, Georgia. The partnership will be directed toward meeting the educational and research objectives as established by this limited public/ private MOU.

The OSP is a non-profit 501(c)3 corporation located in Waycross, Georgia with the mission to "promote ecological tourism and education by providing a convenient point of entry into the Okefenokee--an authentic opportunity for the public to develop an appreciation the wildlife, culture, and natural beauty of the "Land of the Trembling Earth."

### **2. OBJECTIVES:**

The primary objective is to support the academic success of students and to develop appreciation for the very unique Okefenokee Swamp ecosystem.

### **3. IMPLEMENTATION AGREEMENT:**

A. The Parties agree to cooperate with the Okefenokee Regional Educational Services Agency (RESA) in development and implementation of programming, where possible and feasible.

B. The Okefenokee Swamp Park, Waycross, Georgia agrees to:

1. Provide access to the Land of the Trembling Earth via OSP for the purpose of educating students and teachers about this unique regional natural resource in conjunction with the (BCBOE). This would include the use of all facilities and activities, except during private events. Reservations for large school field trips are required.
2. In collaboration with (BCBOE), develop educational programs to be presented to students and teachers to enhance knowledge about the Okefenokee and related topics. This might include workshops conducted via high definition video conferencing and tailored to specific classroom topics and curriculum for PreK-12 groups based on Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) or subsequent standards, as adopted by the GA Department of Education. Middle school/high school programs can be lab and discussion-based. Programs will complement GPS standards in science, social studies, language arts, math, and other areas.
3. Provide the opportunity for level-appropriate scientific and cultural research for faculty and/or students.

4. Provide boats, boat guides, wildlife and other interpretive staff, depending upon availability, for the purpose of assisting the teachers and other volunteers in leading field trips to the Swamp Park.
5. Provide a limited number of tuition-free annual scholarships to the 10-hour Okefenokeeology class for (BCBOE) staff and teachers.
6. Provide a link on the website [www.okeswamp.com](http://www.okeswamp.com) to promote and market upcoming webinars, recorded or live-streamed events and video conferences planned and conducted.

This MOU will not encumber the current or future budgets of OSP until external streams of income are confirmed.

C. The Brantley County Board of Education agrees to:

1. Allow this MOU to be submitted in grant applications by either the OSP or the (BCBOE) to further the mission of providing education about the swamp and related topics.
2. Participate in completing and seeking such grant applications.
3. Work collaboratively with the OSP experts to conduct studies and collect data for authentic, comprehensive, environmental research applications/projects.
4. Encourage Brantley County public school students and teachers to visit the Park, as feasible, utilizing the current Okefenokee RESA discounted group fee schedule.
5. Provide students participating in Career and Technical Student Organizations the opportunity to gain volunteer hours by supporting Swamp Park activities.

This MOU will not encumber the current or future budgets of the (BCBOE) without its ongoing approval.

**4. LIABILITY:**

The parties shall each be responsible for their liability and neither party shall act as an agent for the other for any purposes regarding the MOU. None of the Parties shall be responsible for liability of the other parties as a result of acts of omissions in connection with the performance of the Memorandum of Understanding. (BCBOE) and OSP must maintain and present documentation of all required professional insurance to each other.

**5. IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITIES:**

The (BCBOE) and OSP will be responsible for the implementation of the MOU within their respective organizations. Direct communication from both parties will be an important tool in managing partnership performance.

- A. To offer an authentic and valuable educational experience for students and teachers to further appreciation and understanding of the nature, wildlife, and culture of the Okefenokee Swamp.
- B. To offer a comprehensive training course for teachers of elementary, middle, and high school students on animals found in the Okefenokee Swamp, their habitat, conservation, and protection. The training course will be divided into two parts: orientation and virtual/actual classes. Teachers will learn swamp ecology and a general overview of Swamp biology research techniques. Supplementary curriculum materials and in-class activities will be reviewed and resources supporting continuing education will be presented. The course is described below:

*The initial training course will cover: swamp ecology, field research and its importance, conservation/environmental threats and issues, supplementary curricula and resources, and questions and answers. The purpose of this course is to familiarize students and teachers so they are more aware, not only of swamp ecology, but of serious problems facing this pristine ecosystem and the need for changing our habits to ensure a sustainable future.*

- C. Provide a comprehensive study guide and materials list for most programs.
- D. OSP and the (BCBOE) will work collaboratively to develop a series of educational presentations on swamp plants and animals, their habitat, swamp ecology, Native American and early settler culture, and conservation for grades PreK-12. The topics focused on by these presentations will include water conservation and recycling, watershed management, pollution, storm water run-off, harassment and others, as agreed upon. These presentations will be designed to help students understand that local action can contribute to global change. Others will include a study of the prehistoric inhabitation of Native Americans and the culture developed by early European settlers. These presentations may also integrate into existing curriculum as a general introduction to Okefenokeeology.

## **6. SUB-CONTRACTING**

One Party may not subcontract any portion of this MOU without obtaining prior written approval of the other.

## **7. AMENDMENTS**

The agreement will be reviewed by both Parties annually and written suggestions as to recommended changes, clarifications, deletions or additions will be mutually agreed upon. This MOU will renew annually automatically, unless modified or amended upon written agreement from the (BCBOE) and OSP.

## **8. DURATION**

This MOU shall be in force upon the signatures of all four positions listed in Section 11 and shall remain in force until terminated by either or both parties, as set forth below.

**9. TERMINATION**

If either of the Parties to this MOU are dissatisfied with the performance of any of the obligations imposed on the other Party under the terms of the MOU, the dissatisfied Party shall give written notice to the non-performing Party of the duties which the dissatisfied Party believes have not been performed. The MOU may be terminated by mutual agreement of the (BCBOE) and OSP or by either party upon a 30 day written notice to the other, and or within legal guidelines for any public funding received by mutual agreement of both parties.

**10. SIGNATURES**

In WITNESS WHEREOF, duly authorized representatives of the Parties have executed this MOU effective as of the date indicated.

  
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Kerry Mathie  
Chair, Brantley County Board of Education

Date: 9/8/14

  
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William Clark, MD  
Chair, Okefenokee Swamp Park Board of Trustees

Date: 9/15/14

  
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Greg Jacobs, Ed.D.  
Interim Superintendent, Brantley County School System

Date: 9/8/14

  
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Martin Bell  
General Manager, Okefenokee Swamp Park, Inc.

Date: 9/15/14