To parents who are considering School in the Woods:

School in the Woods is a unique educational option for fourth grade students in Academy District 20. The school is located on 640 wooded acres in Black Forest. **The curriculum is especially designed for children with exceptional interest and aptitude in natural science. Students should demonstrate a high level of personal responsibility and a desire to build relationships and develop community at School in the Woods.**

In order to maximize the students' contact with the natural world, and to minimize our impact on plants and wildlife, School in the Woods is limited to 78 students. Therefore, it may not be possible to accept all students who apply. In order to assure fairness, students will be selected by lottery. Any child’s chances of being accepted into School in the Woods will depend on the total number of **complete** applications received at District 20’s Central Registry by 4:00 PM, Friday, Feb. 28, 2020. Applying early **does not** improve chances.

**Before** selecting School in the Woods for your child, we encourage you to:
1. **Attend** our SITW Choice presentation and Open House on Saturday, Jan. 25, 2020.

2. **Read** over the attached information and questions and consider them carefully. You know your child better than anyone. Try to be as honest and objective as you can about your child’s interest and commitment to a year-long natural science curriculum.

3. **Discuss** this decision at length with your child. We encourage you to have your child express his or her reasons for wanting to attend School in the Woods in writing on the attached form. Then discuss what he or she has written. This writing should **not** be turned in with the Choice Application.

To have your child’s name submitted to the School in the Woods lottery, you must print, sign, and submit a Choice Enrollment Application to Central Registry. **In addition, you must sign and submit the School in the Woods Agreement** that will print along with the online application signature page.

Revised 12-2019
Why have a School in the Woods?

Many elementary students show a natural fascination with wildlife and the outdoors. Yet these same children may have very few chances for direct, prolonged exploration of nature. Each year, the Front Range of the Rockies becomes more urbanized, and natural areas become more scarce. Increasingly, children live, learn, and play indoors, or in managed outdoor environments, with very limited access to wild plants, animals, and open spaces. Many children in our school district do not have opportunities to learn directly in, and from the natural world.

District 20 has access to 640 acres in the Black Forest as an outdoor learning site. To meet the educational needs of elementary children with exceptional interest and aptitude in earth, life, and natural sciences, School in the Woods makes use of this beautiful site as a ‘living classroom.’ Natural science is heavily integrated into the curriculum. A significant part of instructional time is spent outdoors, actively exploring and learning about living ecosystems on the property. Students make direct scientific observations of changing weather, water, soil conditions, plants, and animals. They make use of technology to record their findings, research additional information, and share their results with others.

What is the school’s mission?

The mission of School in the Woods, a science integrated school, is to inspire and educate 4th grade naturalists in, about, and from the natural world.

What about other areas of the curriculum?

The educational program at School in the Woods follows the District 20 Common Core Standards for fourth grade language arts, mathematics and social studies. Our students also participate in the CMAS tests and any other standardized tests which are normally administered to District 20 fourth graders. Enthusiasm for the natural sciences enriches teaching and learning in all areas of the fourth grade curriculum.

“Nature is an educational stimulus of rare force.”

--Enos Mills, father of Rocky Mountain National Park
How are art, music, physical education and foreign language addressed?
The arts, music, and physical activity are integral parts of the educational program at School in the Woods. There are no specialized teachers in these areas. Due to the intensive focus on natural sciences, formal world language instruction is not offered at the school.

What about technology at the school?
Technology is an essential element in the science program at the School in the Woods. Technology is also used to support and enhance other academic areas. Students use computers for research, creative writing, investigations and problem solving. School in the Woods students gather local scientific data and use technology to share their observations with others.

Who are the SITW staff members?
Jonathan Wuerth - Administrator
Patrick Perry - Teacher
Crystal Teger - TAG and Instructional Support
Brad Roberts – Building Manager
Karla Powers - School Secretary
Meg Selke - Teacher
Melissa Seidenberg - Instructional Paraprofessional
Emilie Frei - Teacher
Chris Ulizio – Teacher

Who attends the school?
Due to the natural curiosity of nine- and ten-year olds, and their emerging ability to think scientifically, the school is for fourth graders only. In order to maximize students’ direct contact with nature and minimize impact on the land, the school is limited to 78 students, with three full-time teachers, a half-time teacher, and TAG/instruct. support. After one school year at School in the Woods, each student returns to his or her previous school for fifth grade.

How are students selected?
Any District 20 third grade student who demonstrates a strong interest in natural science may apply for School in the Woods. These students should truly enjoy being outdoors in all seasons and show responsibility for their own safety and the safety of others. Test scores and grades are not considered. An information presentation is held at Edith Wolford Elementary in late January followed by an Open House at SITW for prospective students and their parents. Interested parents next complete a Choice Application and sign the School in the Woods Agreement before the School District Choice deadline in February. Due to the limited number of students, it may not be possible to accept all applicants. If more applications are received than the 78 spots in the school, students are selected by a random lottery. For more information about the application process, please call the school at 234-4330.

Where is the school located?
The school is located on 10 acres within the 640-acre State Land Board property between Shoup and Burgess Roads in Black Forest. This beautiful site features ponderosa pine forests, a pond, and wildlife typical of the Colorado Front Range. The school is housed in a sustainable building that was custom designed to support the community-centered approach we emphasize in our school and its programming.

How are students transported to the school?
Transportation to the school is included in the District’s Choice School transportation program. Some parents choose to carpool to School in the Woods. Most neighborhood schools serve as a pick up and drop off site. SITW students riding the bus will pay a fee and should understand that some bus rides can last up to 1.5 hours due to transfers, lengthy routes, and/or weather conditions. For details about bus schedules, please contact District 20 Transportation. Safe, respectful, and responsible behavior is expected at school, outside, and on all bus rides.

For more information, we invite you to contact the School in the Woods at:
12002 Vollmer Road, Colorado Springs, CO 80908
(719) 234-4330 or jon.wuerth@asd20.org (Administrator)
Questions for Parents to Ask Themselves
When Considering School in the Woods

Deep Interest in Natural Science:

- Does my child especially enjoy learning about plants, animals, weather and other natural processes?
- Does my child enjoy collecting and organizing natural objects such as rocks or shells?
- Is my child observant and curious, always wanting to know how and why?
- Does my child choose to watch nature programs and read books about wildlife and nature?

Enjoyment of the Natural World:

- Does my child truly enjoy being outdoors in all seasons and temperatures?
- Does my child choose to spend free time outdoors?
- Does my child enjoy spending quiet time alone in nature?
- Does my child enjoy participating in nature activities such as Scouts or nature classes?

School Environment:

- Does my child feel comfortable with the idea of leaving friends at his or her home school for his or her fourth grade year?
- Will my child respond well to our school environment with all new people, many transitions, a flexible learning environment, and being taught by a variety of teachers?
- Will my child respond well to a challenging academic program?
- Does my child work well independently, and is he or she self-motivated about school projects?
- Does my child typically complete classroom assignments and homework on time?
- Will my child make the year-long commitment required to be part of this unique program?

Responsibility:

- Can my child be trusted to follow directions from teachers and other staff members?
- Can my child be trusted to always stay with the group when outdoors?
- Is my child concerned about the welfare of other living things?
- Is my child aware of unsafe situations, and does he or she actively seek to avoid them?
- Does my child cooperate with other children and is willing to help us create community?
- Does my child make responsible behavior choices consistently?
- Does my child take responsibility for his or her own actions and always demonstrate respectful behavior?

Revised 12-2019
Important! Student Reflection Form

School in the Woods is a unique school with a strong sense of community. Why are you interested in being part of this community, and what will you contribute to our school? Write a well-developed paragraph of at least 8-10 complete sentences.

This writing is for parents to use in determining their child’s interest in attending School in the Woods. Strong applicants are eager to reflect through their writing across content areas. Reluctance in your child to complete this writing should be considered. It should NOT be turned in with the School of Choice form.
School in the Woods Agreement

BEFORE submitting your child’s name to the School in the Woods lottery, we ask that you and your child GIVE CAREFUL CONSIDERATION to the following points. This form must be submitted with the Choice Enrollment Application to Central Registry for your child’s name to be included in the lottery. One or both parents (guardians) and interested child must initial on each line and sign below.

____ I have made every effort to attend the Choice Presentation/Open House offered by the School in the Woods (see school website). If we cannot attend the Choice Presentation/Open House, we will contact the school.

____ I understand that School in the Woods is a unique educational program designed specifically for fourth grade students who have a deep interest in natural science. My child has demonstrated a strong interest and desire to spend the entire next school year learning in, about, and from the natural world.

____ I understand that safe, respectful, and responsible behavior is required at SITW at ALL TIMES.

____ I understand that the educational program at School in the Woods involves spending significant amounts of instructional time outdoors, in all seasons. My child demonstrates a high tolerance for natural outdoor settings including: direct contact with a variety of plants and terrain, varying weather conditions for extended periods of time, and exposure to environmental allergens (pollen, fungus spores, insects, etc.).

____ I understand that attending School in the Woods would mean that my child would be leaving behind the familiar surroundings and possibly all friends at his or her present school. My child is aware and accepting of the social/emotional implications that may occur, and I am prepared to support him/her during the school year.

____ I understand that my child will be taught by multiple teachers in varied student groupings throughout each school day, and flexibility is important. Given this community aspect to our program, I acknowledge that my child must demonstrate responsible and safe behavior in both indoor and outdoor settings at all times.

____ I understand that any student services my child may have received thus far (SPED, TAG, academic support, counseling) may look different at SITW based on our limited instructional and support staff. I am prepared to partner with SITW staff to help my child be successful.

____ I understand that the longer transportation times to and from SITW may impact before / after school activities.

____ I understand that if my child’s name is drawn in the School in the Woods lottery, my child will be taking one of only seventy-eight places at the school, and their 4th grade spot at their present school may no longer be available (their fifth-grade spot is reserved). I understand that if my child’s name is drawn, my child is committed to attending the school for their entire fourth grade year. Once school begins, it is very challenging to replace students at School in the Woods.

I have discussed all the considerations above with my child. My child is ACTIVELY ENTHUSIASTIC about attending School in the Woods and is COMMITTED to attend the entire fourth grade year. My child really wants to attend!

Student’s Name (please print): ____________________________

Student’s Signature (must be signed by the student): ____________________________

Parent(s) or Guardian(s) Signature(s): ____________________________

Date: ____________________________

PRINT this form. This signature form must be signed and dated. It must be received by Central Registry no later than 4:00 PM, Friday, February 28, 2020. It may be hand-carried, faxed to 719-234-1286, or mailed to 1110 Chapel Hills Dr., Colorado Springs, CO 80920.