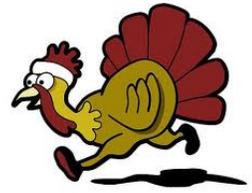


School in the Woods Field Notes

November 2019



Dear Parents:

It was wonderful to have you and your naturalist come to the school for Parent/Naturalist/Teacher Conferences. These meetings are intended to help you learn more about our school and various programming aspects and help us learn more about our naturalists. We truly appreciate you taking time from your busy schedule to come in and talk with us about your child. Please feel free to contact any of us at any time during the school year if there is anything you feel we should know to better help your child learn and be successful.

One of the special highlights for us in October was our day-long visit to Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument. The weather for this early fall trip could not have been better as the next day we had the first snowstorm of the year. Not only did we learn a wealth of new knowledge about this national monument, but the park service staff just loved having School in the Woods onsite, given the depth of curiosity expressed by our naturalists. The lead interpretive park ranger who shared his knowledge and passion with us. After lunch we took our Junior Ranger pledge, allowing all naturalists to receive their badges. Their admission to the monument was free, as they had received their "Every Kid in a Park" national park/monument access card when we went to Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge. This incredible program and access card allows your whole family free admittance to hundreds of parks, monuments, museums, and other national treasures for an entire year! Go online to learn about the huge number of sites you can visit for **FREE**.

We will soon be learning about astronomy. The naturalists have already become more knowledgeable about our solar system: the sun, planets, and other bodies that are found in it. Weekly jobs include three naturalist astronomers who report during Afternoon Meeting each day on astronomical events such as moon phase, sunrise/set, day length, and various solar system occurrences.

We have just begun our archery education unit. After learning proper archery shooting techniques and safety guidelines, naturalists will have several opportunities to head to our field range and practice. Not only do they practice their own shooting skills, they also are able to coach one another. Archery is a great life-long activity that can be noncompetitive and often takes place in the realm of nature.

Language Arts

Earlier this month, we finished reading My Side of the Mountain. This classic has captured the naturalists' hearts, and many identified intimately with Sam, the main

character. We all share Sam's love of nature and natural processes. Our naturalists were able to view the original movie made for this story and compare and contrast various elements from the plot line and cinematography. Now we have begun reading books about three remarkable naturalists: John Muir, Rachel Carson, and Jane Goodall. After reading these books, each student will choose their own naturalist to study. If your child expresses interest, you may want to help him or her get to the library or go on the Internet to research more about their chosen naturalist.

Turkey Trot

What a fantastic day we had for our Eight Annual Turkey Trot! The day before, we cleared a majority of the snow from the course with a snowblower and shovels. The weather really cooperated for us. It was sunny, but just cool enough. With the help of our many volunteers, the run was hugely successful. The determination and smiles on the naturalists' faces said it all. So many of them said they had never completed that sort of distance before. Altogether, our naturalists, along with the Home School Academy students and others, ran over 600 miles in our forest!

Reinforcing Communication Skills at Home

We all understand the importance of being able to communicate with one another, both by hand and on electronic devices. Cursive handwriting offers tremendous benefits including improved neural connections and fine motor skills, increased knowledge retention, improved spelling, and more. Please review the writing worked on at home to ensure careful letter formation. Typing is another skill that is imperative for our naturalists to learn as they communicate through electronic devices. They need to learn proper keyboarding skills. SITW will be sending home information as to how they can reinforce keyboarding skills at home later this month. Everyone will be quite thankful for both the cursive and keyboarding skill development. Naturalists are required to do some practice for both of these skills at home a few times each week.

Changing Weather as the Days Shorten

Colder weather has arrived, and it is important that your child come prepared for the cold and snow we frequently have in the Black Forest. **All our naturalists must have appropriate clothing such as warm jackets, gloves/mittens, and waterproof footwear to be dry and comfortable outdoors during this time of year.** And, even when it is cold, they still need to drink plenty of water. Please make sure that they have a **water bottle every day.** Thank you! Please complete our SITW School Climate Survey. We really value your input. See our web site home page for a link.