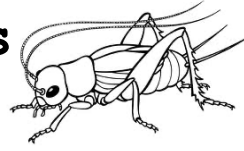


School in the Woods Field Notes

October 2020



Dear Parents:

We have had a fantastic month of September. We are looking forward to our first full month of fall – October! Our first big event was our Evening in the Woods, a very special time. The anticipation of the event was palpable the days before. How exciting to get to stay so late at school, even if we couldn't actually stay the night. We had super weather for our afternoon and evening activities. Naturalists did some gardening, hiked to discover animal signs, learned the Naturalist Song, and participated in activities while getting to know one another. We ended our night with a memorable School in the Woods ceremony where we recognized our 2020-21 School in the Woods naturalists. They all were so proud of themselves and looked wonderful in their new sweatshirts. After a night hike which ended in the dark, we concluded the special evening. Thank you all for helping to make our Evening in the Woods possible.

The next big event was our amazing Pikes Peak field trip! We started our day by spending some time in the montane foothills ecosystem of Garden of the Gods where we were greeted by a small herd of Rocky Mountain big-horn sheep. Our naturalists were super impressed to see these beautiful animals within 100 feet or so of the road. After learning some information about the geology and botany of the park, we were off to the Pikes Peak Highway. Going up the highway, we stopped at Crow Gulch, a montane forest ecosystem. Our next stop was Glen Cove, located in the subalpine ecosystem. Our final stop was at the very top: an alpine tundra ecosystem busy with the construction of the brand-new summit house. Along our travels we saw many animals and a large variety of plants. Make sure to talk with your child about all they learned.

Our naturalists have also been learning that living systems on our planet include green plants (which capture the sun's energy by photosynthesis), herbivores, carnivores, scavengers, and decomposers. During experiments, the naturalists could see that leaves will lose chlorophyll and reveal their true colors. Ask your child to explain these ideas to you.

Sharing Through Writing

Encourage your naturalists to write about their school experiences and their feelings at home. They may want to keep a journal or write notes and letters. This helps you to be aware of your child's progress in writing, and also gives your naturalist an opportunity to share their experiences with you. We have found that it is very valuable for parents to be part of the unique experiences we are able to provide at School in the Woods, and one way is through these writing pieces. We will continue to emphasize the importance of written and verbal communication that is meaningful, utilizes correct conventions, and reflects writer involvement and pride.

Math

Our naturalists have been receiving the benefits of increased opportunities for greater individual differentiation within their smaller groups. They are working to solidify computation strategies for whole numbers using all operations. We are all working diligently to help the naturalists learn their multiplication skills and strategies better. What is most important now, is for them to learn their multiplication facts and have them mastered as soon as possible. We are seeing that those who don't know their facts well, struggle more in learning the various multiplication strategies and word problems. We are unable to spend much time practicing at school. Most of the practice and memorization of these facts needs to be done at home, in the car, or other areas where practice can occur. Organized flash cards work well! We appreciate your support and encouragement with their endeavor to learn their facts.

Type to Learn

We have introduced Type to Learn to our naturalists. Given how much students are required to use technology, having strong typing skills is very important. The age of our naturalists is perfect for learning to type. If they learn this skill well, the benefits will extend far into their lives. Again, we cannot take as much time as we would like to practice during school. Please help reinforcement these skills by encouraging 15-20 minutes of practice 3 times a week. We will offer TRACKS as incentives, but you can offer incentives at the home as well. The practice WILL pay off, and your child will appreciate knowing how to type with speed when their writing pieces become more lengthy.

Important Dates

Thursday, Oct. 8, is a Teacher Work Day, and **Friday, Oct. 9** is a Professional Learning Day. There will be no school for elementary students either day. We'll miss our naturalists! Our virtual Parent Teacher Conferences will be held on **Oct. 21-22.** We ask that our naturalists attend these meetings, so they can reflect on what has gone well for them, and on areas where they consider improvement necessary. This virtual "personal" contact between all of us is extremely valuable in helping know your child better and providing for a successful school year. A SignUp Genius will be coming out at the end of next week. **Oct. 30** is our **Turkey Trot** – We are including information and a pledge envelope in your naturalist's Friday Folder next week. **This is our most important fund-raiser of the year.** This is not a door to door collection, but rather collecting pledges and/or donations from friends and family. Thanks for your support with this worth-while fund-raising activity. Our school will benefit greatly, and our naturalists will share smiles and laughter as they run and walk through our beautiful forest for an hour. **Oct. 30** is also our **Fall Party** from 1:15-2:30. More details to come!