

## ***What is the status of extended field trips at Woods?***

October 10, 2008

The faculty has been working the past two years on a cohesive, logical plan for extended field trip experiences for the students of Woods Learning Center. These trips are a logical part of our hands-on way of learning. There is no substitute for seeing the real world out there. Some of the experiences offered at Woods require a significant amount of resources, and therefore we would like families to be aware of these possibilities and to consider planning for them early on.

In our primary and intermediate pods, children get a chance to explore the area during shorter length trips into the community. The primary pod has begun a mountain adventure day, and the intermediate pod explores Casper's history, government, and economy on its community day.

The upper intermediate pod is when students will begin to do some real exploring out of town. During the years where Wyoming geography and history is the focus of study (such as this year), two out-of-town overnight field trips are taken. Plans this year include a trip to Cody and Thermopolis, where students will see the Buffalo Bill Historical Center and the Wyoming Dinosaur Center, and then a second trip to Ft. Laramie and Cheyenne, where they will visit the Wyoming State Capitol and Museum. These trips are taken with school district transportation, and lodging is camping style in indoor, supervised areas.

On the years where United States geography and history is the focus of study (2009-2010), a trip to Washington D.C. and New York City is possible, as was done in the last school year. As envisioned, this trip would also be part of that year's curriculum and take place during the school year. This trip has been taken with Smithsonian Student Tours as the organizing institution, and had a cost of roughly \$1,300 per student last year. Fundraising would have the goal of making the trip possible for every student, but families should plan on contributing as much as they are able to make this goal possible. We are also looking at some additional scholarship possibilities to ensure each child will have the opportunity to go.

Last year was the pilot for making this trip an integrated part of the upper intermediate experience. It had previously been an optional summer trip. Those who went this time saw students on an intense learning adventure making very powerful connections to their classroom learning that will last a lifetime.

However, as this was a pilot year, there were some inevitable bumps and misunderstandings. As was the goal, every student in upper intermediate was given the opportunity to participate in fundraising and to receive enough financial assistance to go on the trip. Several families made a choice not to participate for various reasons, and a full week of enrichment activities was planned for students who remained. We hope that

with more advance notice and information, this trip will be the expectation for every student in upper intermediate. Any who might still be unable to participate, however, would be able to expect an appropriate school alternative.

In middle school sixth grade, students began what we hope to be an annual tradition, and that is a winter trip to the Teton Science School in Jackson Hole. This trip is taken with school district transportation, and lodging is provided by the school. This past year, all students were able to go with a contribution of \$50, plus a voluntary \$15 for a sleigh ride through the National Elk Refuge, and an investment in the necessary winter outdoor gear. This trip is an intense three-day experience at a world-class facility.

Students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade have also traditionally taken an extended one-day trip somewhere in the region using school district transportation. Past trips have been to the Black Hills, Laramie, Scottsbluff, and the Big Horn area.

Parents of middle school seventh and eighth graders met this year to discuss the future of their travel options. A three-day, two-night trip to Denver has been a traditional part of the middle school year and curriculum for the last 12 years. It was decided to keep this tradition, and to focus our class fundraising (Fall Funfair, Luau Bingo, and the school carnival provide the bulk of the money) on that trip. Over the past couple of years, a personal contribution of \$75 for students (more for chaperones), has been the out-of-pocket cost to go. Students on this trip visit museums, factories, sports and theater events, and other sights. Transportation is provided by the school district and the bulk of our cost is the hotel lodging.

What will remain a summer option is the trip to Montreal and Quebec City offered to seventh and eighth graders in years that alternate with the UI trip to Washington. Seventeen parents and students are already signed up for this trip in June 2009, which will be our fourth. The next trip would be a possibility for 2011. Because the class will focus its fundraising efforts on the Denver trip, Quebec fundraising will be individual or organized outside of school by the participating families. The Quebec trip, like the Washington trip, is taken with Smithsonian Student Travel, and this year's cost is roughly \$1,800 for students.

We hope that being aware and planning ahead will make these trips a possibility for more families. We hope to have some opportunities to discuss such financial planning that could begin years in advance. If you have any questions about these trips, ask any of our staff. These trips do represent a significant amount of work to happen, but with student enthusiasm and parental support, we are always willing to go an extra mile or two.