

Nov/Dec, 2004

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Winter Fun

Looking for something to do this winter break? Have you tried down hill skiing or snowboarding, cross country skiing, or how about snow shoeing? Sound like something you'd like to try? Well get out there and enjoy the beautiful winter weather. Even if the snow is melting here in the Spokane area there is plenty to jump around in on local mountains. If you are tired of malls and traffic snow shoeing is the perfect getaway. The Outdoor Learning Center can provide you with snow shoe rentals and maybe even some trail ideas for your winter adventure. Give us a call if you would like to rent some snow shoes over the holiday break.

Snow Shoe Rentals

\$5 per pair

Two sizes available

Contact Tom Brattebo at the OLC for rental information.

(509) 340-1028

Outdoor Learning Center

Aspiring Geologists Spend a Day in the Field

Recently, the OLC was the focus of an article by Spokesman-Review staff writer Sara Learning on October 28, 2004. The article titled, "Outdoor ed links classroom to real world." Following is an excerpt from the article.

Hunched over in the middle of a sandy creek bed in Riverside State Park, 8-year old Will Compton announced his Discovery Wednesday morning.

"Hey ,you guys, there could have been lava here!"

Greyson Hatcher, 8, rushed over and picked up the rock formation from the sand.

"Its igneous." Look, you can tell 'cause its all holey," Hatcher observed

The 3rd grade students were part of a group from the West Valley School District's Outdoor Learning Center that spent the morning hiking through Deep Creek canyon for the culmination of a unit on geology.

Accompanied by their classroom teachers and teachers from the learning center, the "geologists" set out in search of the three types of rocks they have been studying in the classroom for about 4 weeks.

"So far I've seen sedimentary and igneous," said Garret Smith, 9. "I'm still looking for metamorphic."

As the pack wound its way single file through the canyon carved out by a flood thousands of years ago it was hard to go far before hearing excited voices.

"Oh my gosh, look at that rock over there," said Kristin Norman, 8. "Its got a tree growing out of it!"

Nearby, another student was bending down to look at a granite rock.

"You can't put words to this, its amazing," said Jami Ostby Marsh, a teacher at the OLC. This is stuff they see in the classroom, and then all of a sudden they're seeing evidence that it really does exist out here."

To read the entire article log on the Spokesman-Review website: www.spokesmanreview.com

Picture of the Month: What is the same about this group?



First grade students observe many different types of animal mounts, live animals, and animal pictures then sort them into groups. In this inquiry activity students are able to sort these animals into 5 groups according to how they are the same. By the end of the activity kids have animals in group categories of birds, amphibians, reptiles, fish, and mammals; the animal group they have come to study.

Sign up for an electronic version of the OLC newsletter! Email brook.beeler@wvsd.com

Cycles at the OLC

Since the warm weather turned towards fall, the Outdoor Learning Center (OLC) has been a hub for migrating students. Hardly a day has gone by without a class or two passing through the OLC programs. Many flocks of third grade geologists, coming from every elementary school in the district, rocked with igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic at the OLC and then with a three mile trek through the very real rocks (and logs and mud) in Deep Creek Canyon in Riverside State Park. The Deep Creek adventure was highlighted with an article, including pictures, in the Spokesman-Review on October 28.

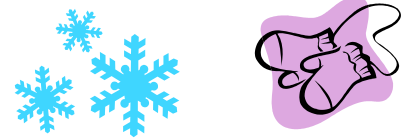
Hard on the heels of young geologists were wave after wave of fifth graders surveying the ecosystems along Latah Creek. Macro

invertebrates from the stream were rounded up, counted, sorted, and released to wiggle another day. No nuthatch or hawk sang or flew unmapped. Possible bear scat sightings were reported, though not verified. Ponderosa pines were counted, measured, and admired. Traces of the 1980 Mt. St. Helens eruption were detected in the soil. Even the historic 1858 hanging tree was discussed along the shore of Latah Creek.

And then it was the invasion of the mammals from the first grade. Sorting types of animals, examining teeth and skulls, migrating, hibernating, adapting, foraging, competing, and surviving or not surviving were all done by the young mammals from the district's first grade classes.

To wrap up the OLC migrations of 2004, all fourth graders will be passing through the OLC for a day of salmon lifecycle and bald eagle awareness, before making the trip to the shores of Lake Coeur d'Alene. There, in what has become an annual migration of West Valley students, the fourth graders will intercept the annual migration of the bald eagles feeding, as they do every year, on the spawning kokanee salmon.

That will complete the OLC lifecycle for 2004. Following the short "hibernation" of Christmas Break, Winterfest at the OLC will begin the cycles for 2005.



Albert's Pellet Coughing it up Monthly



It is an owls time of year to shine! Yes, Hanovi, Willie, and I are famous for the months of November and December. We have been visiting 4th grade classrooms to talk about what else...OWLS!

Students receive an interactive program that gives an overview of what makes and owls such an incredible raptor. We have many adaptations to show and share including silent flight, camouflage, and exceptional hearing. Students don't just sit back and listen they are an integral part of our owl presentations. They ask fantastic questions about our life history and personal stories. We are never shy about sharing our lives with them. One of my favorite questions to answer is: "Who is on first?" I can only reply "HOO HOOO HOOO!" It is the only answer I have ever gotten right on a test!



Left: Third grade students from Pasadena Park explored Deep Creek canyon at Riverside State Park. The field trip reinforced Geology material learned in the classroom and at the OLC. Discoveries of weathered rocks, geologic formations and igneous and sedimentary rocks were happening by the minute. OLC educators found enthusiasm in every turn of the canyon. Overall the trips were full of fun.

Right: Fourth grade students are spending a day at the OLC to study Eagle adaptations, the life cycle of salmon and how they affect one another. Students pictured here are learning about the egg and alevin stage of the salmon life cycle. Students will journey through each stage of the Salmon's life cycle including parr, smolt, adult and spawning salmon.



Left: Learning to record data is an important part of learning the scientific process. Here first graders studying mammals play a game to determine "How many bears can live in this forest?". After collecting food they must record the energy intake and determine if they gathered enough food to survive. Students at the OLC practice their reading, writing, and math skills in order to become good scientists.

OLC Featured in Washington State Environmental Education Report

Washington State graded 3.0. West Valley earns 4.0

At the request of the Washington State Legislature, a report card summarizing the status of environmental education (EE) in Washington in 2004 was recently released. Grades ranged from A to D over five categories. West Valley's Outdoor Learning Center (OLC) was a featured program in the report card, including numerous pictures of WV students and descriptions of the OLC and its programs. Tom Moore, director of the OLC, in a statement that, perhaps, summarizes the best of the EE programs in the state, is quoted, "Kids learn best when their learning is based on personal experience. We humans are hard-wired to connect with nature, so OLC kids go outdoors and really get to know our wildlife and landscape. That connection improves learning overall."

The state report card EE subjects and grades are as follows:

1. Effectiveness of EE in improving students standardized test scores: A
2. Legal and Academic foundations of EE: A
3. Independent, innovative approaches to EE: A
4. General Awareness of EE: C
5. State support of EE : D

The three grades of A can be summarized like this:

1. Statewide research shows that students using EE consistently score higher in tests than students without.
2. Washington State Code states that "All common schools shall give instruction in science with specific reference to the environment. All teachers shall stress the worth of kindness to all living creatures of the land."

OLC Wish List

Thanks to our project sponsor, The Big Horn Foundation all donations are tax deductible. The Bighorn Foundation is a nonprofit 501c(3) Corporation, "Educating Today's Youth for the Wildlife Resources Of Tomorrow"

- Nature related story books
- Rain Ponchos
- Reams of Recycled Paper
- Native Animal Puppets
- Garden Tools
- Fish Mounts



www.bighornfoundation.org

3. Formal and non-formal EE networks help encourage school-community partnerships, and increase efficiency and effectiveness of EE delivery at the local level.

General awareness of EE in Washington, with a grade of C, is summarized as "not currently available to all students, mostly due to a lack of awareness about what EE is, how to include it in the curriculum, and its benefits to students, teachers and communities." A 2001 survey of all of Washington's K-12 schools found that "33% were unaware of the state's environmental education mandate."

The D for state support for EE is summarized as "efforts to integrate environmental education into schools and communities...are primarily hindered by lack of a unified approach, supportive structure, and adequate funding."

The 2004 EE report card lists actions that "Washington residents who care about our kids, our communities, and our future can take to promote" EE in Washington. The American Association for the Advancement of Science urges "teachers to take science out of the textbook and into reality and to help students do science rather than learn about it."

West Valley School District and the Outdoor Learning Center is a recognized leader in Washington State in the world of environmental education. As a district, West Valley, has earned straight A's in EE. With continued support from the district and community the Outdoor Learning Center hopes to stay at the top of the Environmental Education Leadership list.

Winter Festival 2005 at the OLC

If you are outside the West Valley School District we would love to have you visit our center. We have planned a fun and fantastic Winter Extravaganza for the month of January. Activities are open to all ages for a small fee from January 10th-21st.

Winter Festival half day activities include: Snow Shoe Relay, Winter Bird Identification, Animal Tracking, and Hot Chocolate and Cookies.

If you would like to bring your students to the center for some winter activities please contact Jami or Brook to schedule a time. 340-1028

Quips and Quotes

Students Share Their Thoughts

This month we asked students to explain why winter is their favorite season. We are proud to report all of the responses we obtained involved outdoor activities. Those who answered snowball fights assured us they were not happening at school. Here are some of the other answers we received.



"I like to play in the snow."

—Brenna Fransisco



"Building snowforts."

—Brandon Borg



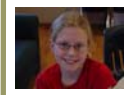
"Snowball fights."

—Armand Pinyero



"Snowboarding and snowball fights with my friends."

—Randall Harris



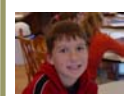
"Going Sledding."

—Kaite Wee



"Snowball fights, but not at school."

—Harrison Wells



"Having snowball fights."

—Chris Shannon

Calendars - January/ February

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursdays	Friday
3	4	5	6	7
10 WinterFest	11 WinterFest	12 WinterFest	13 WinterFest	14 WinterFest
17 No School	18 WinterFest	19 WinterFest	20 WinterFest	21 WinterFest
24/31	25	26	27	28 Project Wild Workshop

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	1	2	3	4
7 3rd Grade NA Studies	8 3rd Grade NA Studies	9 3rd Grade NA Studies	10 3rd Grade NA Studies	11 3rd Grade NA Studies
14 3rd Grade NA Studies	15 3rd Grade NA Studies	16 3rd Grade NA Studies	17 3rd Grade NA Studies	18 3rd Grade NA Studies
21 No School	22	23	24	25
28				



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