

## Weekly Digest

Week 14, December 12-14, 2023



One or more of the guides may have predicted that the kids would get more and more ramped up and wild as the festive break approaches – but instead, here’s what we observed this week:

- A second-grader playing card and dice games with a kindergartener, helping to remember the rules, writing up a score sheet, carefully sorting the more difficult cards off to the side, learning a new game together, and helping with the adding-up of points.
- A fourth-grader listening respectfully to a second-grader talk through his anxiety about the height of the tree limb he was sitting on and about whether he felt able to jump down, then earnestly offering support and empathy for his younger friend, advising him to listen to and trust his own instincts.
- Two older students patiently answering a younger student's many questions and pausing their conversation to watch him whenever he said “watch this!”
- A fourth-grader offering to help a third-grader read some trickier words in a card game
- A couple of younger students enthusiastically volunteering themselves to participate in middle-school Shakespeare read-aloud, and enacting said reading with much gusto and hilarity.

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- A fourth-grader helping a Kindergartner put their coat on (winter gear can be tough!)
  - A student, who had just heard a peer commanding someone else to do something, suggesting pleasantly, “You know what might be better is if you said ‘would you please...?’”
  - A mock battle in the pasture which involved mass cooperation, negotiation, mutual support, assistance with training maneuvers, and overall demonstrated much more social-emotional skill-building than aggression.

Our community contract is up and running, and we are seeing a flowering of the kindness, respect, safety, empathy, and responsibility that it outlines. The multi-age, play-based model of learning is looking pretty good right now, with students helping and supporting other students, with guides facilitating and emphasizing cooperation and collaboration instead of providing ready-made plans or solutions. This is a lovely note to sound at the end of the year, and makes us look forward with positive energy to the year to come. After we have a nice restful couple of weeks off, of course. One week left of Elderberry fun!

## Guides' Offerings/Students' Agendas

For the fourteenth week we learned about, discussed, played with:

**History/Social Studies:** Mini-reports on the Prophet Mohammed, the Empress Wu Zeitan, and Gregory the Great. More discovery and discussion of medieval life and culture associated with *the Midwife's Apprentice* read-aloud. The importance of calligraphy in Islam. Brief inquiry into monasticism and illuminated manuscripts (more to come!). Participating in a tutorial survey about favorite colors; results graphed and to be announced and analyzed next week. Thinking up project ideas.

**Science/Technology:** More on properties of ice, how and where it will form. Reading and discussion of the Islamic contribution to mass paper production, books (codices, not scrolls) and libraries. Observation of the behavior and habits of horses, goats, cats, wild birds, and stream life in winter. Learning about some medieval weapons, notably the Zweihander.

**Language Arts:** Continuing *The Midwife's Apprentice*, and for middle school, reading aloud *Julius Caesar* (including guest appearance by two fourth graders). More parts of speech, stringing letter beads onto necklaces, reading, and composition with the Mad Libs Game.

**Arts/ Music/ Crafting:** Making pine cone bird feeders. Painting wooden ornaments, designing and constructing paper hand puppets, making decorated paper-cone trees. Discussion of image-making and the decoration of churches, mosques, and synagogues in the Middle Ages. Production of a couple of illustrated scrolls, including one map of the farm!

**Math:** Playing and adding with Shut the Box, and designing a score sheet for it.

**Health/Social-emotional:** Safely negotiating risky play with bamboo poles, practicing executive functioning by “looking before leaping!”

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**P.E.:** Hiking and climbing (most notably this week was up the giant hill and back down again!), tag, swinging on a vine, active games.

## **Announcements**

**Mini-Reports:** We will be ready to hear mini-reports from the following people next week: B: the Prophet Ali, J: Charlemagne, Z: Rashi, B: Prince Taishi Shotoku.

**Project Sheets:** Guides helped students to find a topic for this cycle's projects this week. The project sheets with information about your student's ideas and help they may need were sent home in their backpacks. Families are invited to join us for project presentations on January 16 and 18 at 2 PM.

**Next week** is our last week before a 2-week break. We're planning to learn about fire safety, building, starting, and putting out a fire in our fire pit each day. Families are welcome to join us Thursday from 1-3 PM for s'mores to celebrate the winter solstice. Students' agendas include Show & Tell and Pajama day/s!

Thank you and enjoy your weekend!

Jennifer, Julia, and Stephanie