

## Weekly Digest

Week 27 April 2-4, 2024



### **“Nature” Is Life (all of it, including us!)**

When we think about “nature,” maybe we think of a peaceful scene in forest, shore, or meadow – a quiet or majestic place, beautiful scenery, trees whispering, birds chirping. We participants in outdoor school are well-acquainted with the healing and nourishing effect being “in nature” has, and we know how good it is for humans to spend time outside. Our rose-colored imaginings might not jump immediately to the image of leaden skies, day-long dark, pouring/drizzling/threatening/recurring rain, the chill, the mud, and everything and everybody being somewhere on the spectrum of damp to soaked. Lightning, flooding, high winds, downed trees, closed roads, power outages, hail – how quickly we can forget about all these, until it’s that time again! Our welcome-back week to outdoor school was all about the weather – possibly the most challenging we have seen yet, not least because it was so prolonged. We already know that nature is not always peaceful and rosy, and if we forget

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that nature includes US, the people, doing this life thing, then being at Elderberry is always ready to remind us.

Though we felt safe and were happily engaged in the barn when we couldn't be properly outside, the weather was truly something we needed to make accommodations for, and as we did – we learned! A couple of great things we noticed this week were 1.) the resourcefulness of children in the barn as they played a million games, discussed topics in a group, and moved smoothly from one activity to another, and 2.) the great opportunity this weather presented for kids to use their skills of observation and reasoning in order to consider safety concerns (with direction from the guides.) Observing the changing nature of the water, erosion, the resident goose, mud, etc., assessing how these could affect safety, and making decisions each day accordingly, all help to build skills in executive function, prioritizing, weighing risk and benefit, anticipating different scenarios, and much more. All of these are not only “life skills,” but help those academic pursuits and project work as well. It was an amazing first week back! That said – we won't be sorry to see the spring weather return.

We wish P a happy birthday!

## **Guides' Offerings/Students' Agendas**

For the twenty-seventh week we learned about, discussed, played with:

**History/Social Studies:** Using existing knowledge and pictorial clues to guess, compare, and arrange dates of events playing Timeline, discussing what spies do and why, specifically relating to world wars, the development of the atomic bomb, and the space race. Reading books on biologist Ernest Everett Just, and engineer Joseph Bazalgette.

**Science/Technology:** Spy science activity writing with invisible ink, announcement of history of medicine mini-reports, discussion of the eclipse and eclipse glasses, finding and observing frogs laying eggs, observing male goose aggressive behavior and discussing possible reasons for it (female goose is sitting on eggs, we have been away for a week, the electric fence for his enclosure is solar powered), building a house for “bunny” out of nature materials, making plant and mushroom discoveries, circle creek engineering using logs/sticks/rocks, learning about different types of weather (rain, wind, hail) by being IN it!

**Language Arts:** Poem “Spring” by Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Reading Hatchet and various picture books, essays from Breakfast On Mars, Pokémon Mad Libs, story-telling, Decoding activity created and directed by Penny (a preview of what we will be learning more about next week!).

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**Arts/Music/Craft:** Dot marker art, drawing, finger knitting, shelter building/creating nature art with rocks, sticks, etc.

**Math:** playing Race to the Treasure, Go Fish, Crazy 8s, SkyJo, Blokus, Loot, Rat-a-Tat Cat, and Loonacy, reviewing what dates are for Modern Times, calculating how long this time period is, comparing length to other previous cycle time periods, comparing and estimating dates and working with negative numbers in Timeline, multiplying to count birthday mini-cupcakes and dividing to figure out how many each person would get.

**Health/Social-Emotional/Sensory:** figuring out basic human needs stemming from discussion of Hatchet (food, fire, water, shelter), helping younger students learn and play games, safety and housekeeping tour to consider the effect of our presence and behavior on the farm, its animals, and the property, group discussion of what to do about Pokemon discontent (responsibility for solutions given to the kids), middle school doing site scan of pasture and circle creek to help assess safety for younger kids, appreciating the sensory impact of playing with sand and different kinds of mud.

**P.E.:** Swinging, running, freeze tag in the rain, jumping, climbing, building with rocks, sand, sticks.

## **Announcements**

**Food!** Parents, your children can get amazingly hungry at outdoor school! Please make sure that your child has a nutritious and plentiful lunch with them every day, in addition to sufficient water. We do redirect them back to their lunches where it may be the case that some less favorite items still remain, but some kids continue to ask us for more food and water, and while we try to have extra water on hand, we can't consistently provide snacks for the students.

**Mini-Reports: History of Medicine:** Please note that a new cycle of mini-reports for 4th grade and up has been assigned, and we will share them the week of April 16-18. Check Slack or your email for details.

Thank you and enjoy your weekend!

—Jennifer, Julia, and Stephanie