

180 Days of Thinking with ICSD

Day 92: IPEI/KDT! Buddy Up-Mary Grainger, IPEI Board Member

Posted on [June 17, 2013](#)



This week I attended the Community Foundation of Tompkins County (CFTC) event at the Ithaca High School Performing Arts Center Black Box Theater. Over 25 nonprofits were highlighted as the Helen Howland Foundation Grants were awarded including one for the “Buddy Up” component of *Kids Discover the Trail! (KDT!)*.

KDT! is the collaboration between ICSD, the Discovery Trail, and the Ithaca Public Education Initiative (IPEI)

that began almost ten years ago when representatives of the three organizations began meeting to discuss the idea that has since evolved to be part of every ICSD elementary students' experience.

Each year 2900 students have learning experiences with the eight member organizations of the Discovery Trail during over 150 field trips and during in-classroom activities pre-trip and post-trip. Considering the curriculum, the museums and the public library are matched with a grade level. Each classroom is paired with another from another elementary school so that children get to know students from other neighborhoods since they will eventually go to secondary school together

From the very start there were two compelling goals of *KDT!*;

1. equal and broad access to amazing resources of the trail organizations
2. social interaction between students across our diverse and large district

For example, Caroline and BJ Martin first graders go to the Museum of the Earth together since they will eventually go to DeWitt Middle School. Students have "buddies" during the *KDT!* activities and often throughout the year using everything from traditional pen pal letters to Skype conversations, in addition to in-person interaction.

IPEI and the other collaborators knew that these bridges we were helping to foster across the district were desirable and effective when teachers began requesting more opportunities for interaction so the *KDT!* Steering Committee created Buddy Up Trips.

Classes can now request funding to do another activity together such as additional field trip related to their *KDT!* curriculum or another common interest, or to a

Discovery Trail site or another community resource, or for social and recreational activities

Thanks to the Howland Foundation of the CFTC for helping make these worthwhile activities possible.



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