



Ithaca Public Education Initiative

Northeast’s Environmental Ambassadors Aim to

Caren Arnold’s second-grade “environmental ambassadors” are out to change habits at Northeast Elementary School. “We all produce waste—about four pounds a day—and we get to choose what we do with it,” Arnold says: recycle it, compost it or send it to a landfill.

Thanks to a grant from IPEI, Arnold purchased books for her classroom and took her students, along with Northeast’s other two second-grade classes, on a pair of field trips that combined to make a big impression.

At Ithaca’s Tompkins County Solid Waste facility, the students saw first-hand where trash and recycled materials go. In a nearby classroom, recycling specialist Nancy Webster gave them some fine points of recycling. A month later, the second-graders visited Cayuga Compost’s facility in Trumansburg.

Right at their feet, co-owner Mary Proctor told them, was material collected that morning from the ICSD, possibly even the remains of their own lunches from the day before. Proctor pointed out foreign objects like glass, plastic, metal, styrofoam and milk cartons that had made their way into the “compost.” Ithaca students are “doing better” at sorting, she said, but still have room to improve.

The class walked past seven compost windrows to arrive at the result of 12 months’ composting, a large pile of dark-brown screened humus—“last year’s lunch,” Proctor called it. The class is now working to create an informational video on how to improve recycling and composting efforts at Northeast.



Recognize a Student’s Teachers or School with a Gift to IPEI



At the end of the school year or at graduation, a gift to IPEI is a special way to say thank you. It’s as easy as indicating on an IPEI gift form envelope or online that you wish to make a gift “in honor of.” Gifts can be designated for “wherever the need is greatest,” or to the I.H.S. or LACS Senior Class Gift Fund, or to another IPEI program or affiliate. A certificate will be delivered to the staff member(s) recognized by your gift(s)!

Belle Sherman teacher Peggy Dolan shared that she was “honored that a family recognized my work and dedication to being a teacher. I greatly appreciated their willingness to contribute to IPEI.”

Steve Weissburg who teaches math at Ithaca High, “Feels really fortunate to work in a great community that really values education. My students and I have benefitted from IPEI grants so I really appreciate what the donations accomplish.

One family gives to IPEI every year anonymously in honor of teachers who have been significant for their children. “Since the day our older child came home from his first day of Kindergarten and said ‘I had a great day!’, we’ve felt grateful to the ICSD staff for the school experiences. We appreciate them!”

Rehana Huq donated in honor of ICSD educators who touched her son’s life. “We come from an immigrant culture where teachers are revered and considered almost divine so we wanted to give recognition to those who do so much for young people. IPEI is a wonderful organization that makes a difference by supporting teachers and student growth.”

IPEI is a not-for-profit organization that connects the ICSD and the community through collaboration, engagement, gifts and grants. For more information, see www.ipei.org or contact 256-IPEI (4734) or ipei@ipei.org.

KDT trip to the Museum of the Earth

“I think this program is so important! The shared experience for all elementary students is special. This program is one that makes the ICSD educational experience unique.”

KDT! began as a once-a-year field trip by Ithaca elementary classes to Discovery Trail (DT) : and has grown in its first ten school years into a comprehensive learning experience for teacher students, and DT educators alike, with a social interaction component for students paired with bud from another ICSD school. Since 100 percent of ICSD elementary classrooms are involved, 2 students participate in a total of 150 field trips plus additional activities pre- and post-trip including the keepsake book that complements the content.

Every year a professional evaluation is undertaken with results such as over 90 percent teachers agreeing that *KDT!* enhances the school experience through curriculum-based learning that students learn new things. They agree that it promotes mutual understanding and respect among elementary students from different neighborhoods.

Other quotes gathered recently:

- “My buddy teacher and I worked hard to truly build a connection between our classrooms. We wrote letters, spent a day together at their school doing various dinosaur related activities, and rode the bus together. It was fabulous... the kids loved it and really met some new friends.”
- “Each Discovery Trail site is rich in experience and learning opportunities, and it would be a mistake to not share these gems with our schoolchildren.”
- “I think that the Discovery Trail spots are great resources in our community. The mixed school experience is what makes it VERY important to me.”

