



A Collaboration of
Ithaca Public Education Initiative
Discovery Trail
Ithaca City School District

Connecting Elementary Schools and the Discovery Trail

Almost every ICSD elementary student and classroom teacher hits the trail each school year for *Kids Discover the Trail!*. This incredible collaboration is made possible by the amazing work of the *KDT!* Steering Committee, the ICSD teachers and bus drivers, the Discovery Trail educators at the eight different sites, and because of generous contributors to IPEI and the Discovery Trail sites.

Program Goals

- 1) Enhance school experience** through curriculum-based learning that includes exploratory learning experiences for grades PreK through 5 at the eight Discovery Trail sites. The program also includes classroom activities before and after the visits. The curriculum is carefully designed to meet NYS Learning Standards. An independent evaluator monitors how well goals are met and provides suggestions for improvement.
- 2) Provide equal access** to Discovery Trail sites so that every elementary student in Ithaca schools can take advantage of these learning opportunities. Although many classrooms and families visit the Discovery Trail sites independently, many more are now able to take advantage of this educational program.
- 3) Promote understanding and respect** among elementary students from different neighborhoods by providing opportunities for positive social interaction through shared academic experiences. Each year, classrooms from different schools are linked and visit the Discovery Trail site together.
- 4) Expand community awareness** of the resources of the Discovery Trail by reaching out to students, their families and others in the community. Students take home materials that encourage families to visit, including free admission passes.

Here's How It Works

Each grade, Pre-K through 5th, is linked with one Discovery Trail organization. Trips to each site combine students from two of the district's elementary schools. Fifth graders visit two sites, which provides two opportunities to mix with their peers as they prepare for the transition to middle school. The goal is to have each child over the course of their elementary school years experience each of the eight Discovery Trail sites. More than 95% of the district's elementary classes participate in the program.

Grade Level Partnerships

Pre-Kindergarten.....Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell
Animals in art: Children love animals and are delighted to find them throughout the museum's collections.

KindergartenTompkins County Public Library
Books about Friendship and Family: The joy of reading comes alive at the library when students listen to stories, learn how to use a library, receive a library card, and choose books to take home.

First Grade.....Museum of the Earth at PRI
Dinosaurs: Studying dinosaurs teaches how scientists develop knowledge of extinct animals and builds appreciation of science while learning about fascinating creatures.

Second Grade.....Sciencenter
Power the Future: Students are introduced to climate change and renewable energy, and they participate in a hands-on inquiry based exploration of capturing power from wind.

Third Grade.....Cornell Plantations
Native Plants and Wildflowers: Children explore the beauty of the outdoors while learning about plant reproduction and developing an appreciation of native flora and their habitats.

Fourth GradeThe History Center in Tompkins County
19th Century Life in an Eight Square Schoolhouse: Students learn local history and how children lived prior to the Industrial Revolution; attending a school day in a one room schoolhouse.

Fifth Grade..... Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell
Animal Adaptation, Human Environmental Impact: Children use the indoor and outdoor spaces to study how birds adapt to specific habitats and human impact.

Fifth Grade.....Cayuga Nature Center
Ropes Course and Environmental Stewardship: Outdoor adventure teaches environmental respect and importance of team building; students learn to work together before middle school.

How Parents Can Help

Ask your child's teacher about their planned *KDT!* trip. If you have time, volunteer to chaperone a trip. After your child makes his/her trip, go back again to the site and get your child to show you what the class did on the visit. Watch for the *KDT!* Book coming home and check out the parent flyer enclosed in the book. Consider a tax deductible gift to IPEI for *KDT!*. Call us at 256-4734 or visit www.ipei.org for more information.

Participation

Last year, 2848 elementary students and 156 teachers in Ithaca's elementary schools visited their Discovery Trail site for an on-site, hands-on learning experience. That's virtually 100% participation; we anticipate an equal number participating this school year 2009-2010.

Families Visit

Take-home materials including free admission passes encourage families to visit. This program seeks to increase use of all Discovery Trail sites by expanding public awareness of their resources.

Books for Every Student

Books are selected jointly by teachers and Discovery Trail educators to enhance the learning experience; link the classroom, home and Discovery Trail site; and encourage a love of reading through the joy of book ownership. Each child receives a book to use for the trip, in the classroom and to take home as their own. The Family Reading Partnership assists with book identification, ordering, and distribution.

Pre-Kindergarten

“Shapes” Museum of Modern Art, or
“Look, Look, Look” Nancy Elizabeth Wallace

Kindergarten

“Library Lion” Michelle Knudson

First Grade

“Digging Up Dinosaurs” Alikei

Second Grade

“Our Earth: Clean Energy” Peggy Hock

Third Grade

“Wildflowers: A Peterson’s First Guide”

Fourth Grade

“The Secret School” Avi

Fifth Grade

“The Birds of Sapsucker Woods” Jeffrey V. Wells and Allison Childs Wells
and

“The Climb, Book 2” Gordon Korman

Program Funding

The program is funded through the generosity of foundations, corporations and individuals in our community. The budget of \$80,000 per year covers Discovery Trail admissions and program fees, busing, teacher professional development, and program administration and evaluation. This program depends on wide community support and gifts of all sizes are needed. For more information about how to make a gift, call IPEI at 256-4734.

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