For Elementary and Middle School students, the classroom experience is not enough. They are seekers, trying to understand the wider world—the natural environment as well as the physical and social worlds built by humans—and their place in it. Reading books, looking at pictures, watching videos, or listening to stories can help. These are necessary but not sufficient. First-hand experience deepens understanding and makes ideas both concrete and memorable. Beyond this, travel provides real opportunity for community building, and the development of practical life experiences beginning with planning the days, making arrangements for airline tickets and hotel accommodations, and packing your bags, and then extending to money management, navigating the subway, using a hand net to collect specimens, paddling a canoe, cooking for twenty, and dish washing, as well as many chances to practice.
Sixth-grade visits...

Colonial Williamsburg

Williamsburg was a fun trip for me. We got to the historic area of Williamsburg where everybody acted as they were living in the 1700s. We also went to see the Jamestown forts, museums, docks, and have dinner there. In Yorktown, we went to see the battlefield (where we could go shopping for souvenirs, watch documentaries, go to museums, and tour around. Williamsburg was a fun trip that I will always remember for the rest of my life, and I wish I could go again someday.

in the historic area of Williamsburg. We could go shopping for souvenirs, watch documentaries, go to museums, and tour around. Williamsburg was a fun trip that I will always remember for the rest of my life, and I wish I could go again someday.

Continued on page 3

Sixth-grade visits...

Colonial Williamsburg

Williamsburg was a fun trip for me. We got to to the historic area of Williamsburg where everybody acted as they were living in the 1700s. We also went to see the Jamestown forts, museums, docks, and have dinner there. In Yorktown, we went to see the battlefield (where we could go shopping for souvenirs, watch documentaries, go to museums, and tour around. Williamsburg was a fun trip that I will always remember for the rest of my life, and I wish I could go again someday.

in the historic area of Williamsburg. We could go shopping for souvenirs, watch documentaries, go to museums, and tour around. Williamsburg was a fun trip that I will always remember for the rest of my life, and I wish I could go again someday.

Continued on page 3
Williamsburg was my favorite thing that I did in sixth grade. It was so much fun that I didn’t want to leave. One of the coolest things that we did was go see Dean Shostak’s crystal concert. That was amazing. He has one of the ten glass armonicas in the world and one of the two glass violins in the world. He played both of them for us. He also played the [Benjamin Franklin] glass armonium and the crystal bascher. Those were also very cool. Overall, the crystal concert was a brilliant experience.

Another cool thing that we did was go to Jamestown. We went to the American-Indian section first. That was so awesome. We got to scrape fur off of hide with oyster shells, and we got to make a fire with a very cool tool. We saw all of their huts and went inside of them. One of the huts had a huge bear hide on the wall. Then we headed over to the colonial part of Jamestown. It was a little bit different from the American-Indian section. We put on armor and looked into the cottages. And that’s where I held a chicken for the first time! We also saw the church there. Williamsburg was the best trip ever!
and when started to get scared. I believed the history that the lady told us, but I didn't believe the ghosts part. Then it was a long time to go to the second house. They put us all in a room and the person that was telling us stories talked really loud. Then she started to touch fire and were so impressed about that. Before the lady left, she screamed so loud that said she was going to wake up the ghost and held my hand really tight. The last house we visited was the least scary of the three. They only talked about death in the third house. When the ghost tour finished, and were freaked out about ghosts, but and I were not. Then we started walking back to the hotel and got over it.
It was approximately 5:00 am when we arrived at the Houston Intercontinental Airport. With our suitcases in tow, we giddily embraced our friends, silly with anticipation of the Washington, D.C., trip, the voyage to our nation’s capital that we had been waiting for all year. Although there were many sleepy eyes and tired faces in the crowd (especially that of Mr. Noah, who had recently arrived home to Houston after a week in Princeton, and was traveling once again after a brief respite), we all shared an eagerness to begin our travels.

After the customary distribution of our boarding passes and the traditional march through security, we were ready to fly. We boarded an express flight to O’Hare International airport in Chicago, the trip that would take us to our connecting flight. Although many adolescents such as us amuse themselves with iPods and Game-boys on flights, we complied with the school’s policy against PEDs (Personal Electronic Devices) and made do with more traditional methods of entertainment (i.e. card games, socialization, and my personal favorite, novels).

Our typical regimen was somewhat thrown off that day; we ate lunch at 9:00 am because it would be our last opportunity to eat on the ground until we arrived in D.C. But it felt about right to us; we usually eat around five hours after we wake up, anyway. Still, when we arrived in D.C., we couldn’t help but feel as if it was much later than it was. Tired from a day of traveling, we boarded a unique unit of transportation: the subway.

The subway was a new premise for the seventh graders, but the eighth graders knew the tunnels and the lines like the back of their hand. Aided by the subway managers and we were able to navigate the underground without many trials or tribulations. However, those memories of frantically rushing to catch a train, only to discover that your small paper card had been demagnetized by your purse, room key, or cell phone will not be ones that we soon forget.

continued on page 6
When we arrived at the hotel, we knew that our long-awaited break was just around the corner. So we gritted our teeth and toughed out the walk of medium length to the restaurant where we would eat dinner. After dinner we all but collapsed in the circle where we held our nighttime meeting. As soon as we were dismissed, we rushed back to our rooms and collapsed for the night (at least, I know I did). But those few hours of darkness passed far too quickly, and before we knew it, it was Tuesday morning.

The Post Oak Middle School took a trip to Washington, D.C., from May 3 to May 8, 2010. The theme of our trip this year was “war and peace.” On Wednesday morning, we went to the Natural History building of the Smithsonian and walked through the Hall of Human Origins. I thought that was really cool—it was interesting to see what our ancestors looked like. They also had a booth there where you took your picture and it morphed into an early human. That was awesome but sort of creepy. Following that, we walked to the Native American Indian building of the Smithsonian. While we were there, a tour guide took us around the Native American Indian exhibit and told us about the different tribes. We also watched a film on Native American Indian life. That was my favorite part of the trip because they had native music playing and they had things projected onto the dome-shaped ceiling. We ate lunch at the museum café. In the afternoon, we looked at many war memorials, which included the World War II Memorial, the Korean War Veterans Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial, and the D.C. War Memorial. I enjoyed the Lincoln Memorial the most because the statue of Abraham Lincoln was so huge, there was marble everywhere, and it was really pretty. My second favorite was the D.C. War Memorial because it felt the most meaningful. Although the World War II Memorial was beautiful, it seemed more commercial. The Korean War Veterans Memorial was interesting but it was the least dramatic. I really enjoyed our trip to D.C. and I am looking forward to next year’s trip.

After a late night on Thursday, we all were able to sleep in (a little) and get some much needed rest. By 8:00 am Friday morning, everyone had woken up and was at breakfast or getting ready for breakfast. Everyone ate breakfast and then went up to their rooms and started packing and cleaning up the room a little bit so that we all would be ready for the ride back home. The whole process of packing and cleaning took about 2-3 hours. Once everyone was done, we met at the place where we had been having our circle all week, which was a little area just outside of all of our rooms. We met there with our luggage and things ready to go. We called our parents to let them know we were on our way.
Once everyone was done calling and all the phones were off, we checked out of our hotel, assembled into our subway groups, and headed to the Dupont Circle Subway Station. After the long walk to the station, we were ecstatic (or at least I was), to find out that the escalators were working so that we would not have to lug our luggage down the huge escalator! Once we got off the escalator, we used the ticket fares that Ms. Gray had purchased for us earlier in the day to get onto our subway ride back to the airport. We got on the subway for a while, then switched to another train to head to the airport. Once we got off the subway at the airport stop, we walked to the escalators (which were also working!), got on them, and made our way down into the airport.

Once in the airport, we found the check-in, we checked into our flight then we dropped off our bags, went through security (where our group had a few random checks), then found our gate and got some lunch. After lunch we waited in our gate until it was time to board. When it was time to board, we all got up, got on the plane sat in our seats, and got ready for takeoff. Once the plane was in the air, some people slept, some played card games, and some listened to music, while others watched what was playing on the TVs. Then we experienced some scary turbulence that left everyone a bit shaken up. About 20-30 minutes later, we landed in Chicago. When we were in Chicago, we found our gate, got our tickets, and ate dinner. Then we waited to board our flight. Once on the flight, we did what we did before, but this time, there was not as much turbulence and no urgent bathroom breaks. So the flight went smoothly and when we landed in Houston, everyone was ready to go home. We landed, got our bags from baggage claim, and then we all went home with our parents.

Overall I think that this trip went very well and it was an amazing experience that I will never forget. As a Middle School travel manager, I was amazed at how it turned out. On behalf of and myself, I would like to thank everyone who helped us with planning and carrying out all of the plans and goals we had for this trip. It turned out amazing and we could not have done it without you guys!
Green tip of the week: cut your home electricity bill

By Rakesh Agrawal, Parent

What you don’t measure, can’t be managed, and so it goes with electricity consumption. That’s why I installed an energy monitoring device in our home last year — the TED5000 (TED = The Energy Detective). With the TED5000, we’ve reduced our electricity bill by 30 percent (on average) and to boot, it’s generated great discussion with family and friends about electricity consumption.

The TED5000 device sits in our home’s breaker box and measures energy consumption in real-time. This data is stored, uploaded to the Internet to Google’s PowerMeter product, and displayed in real-time on an iPod-like box on our kitchen counter. Electricity consumption is shown in watts and $/hr (the TED5000 figures this out after you tell it how much you pay for electricity).

We found that the TED5000 has been useful in two ways:

1) Real-time feedback: The TED5000 display sits on our kitchen counter and we pass it whenever we’re entering or leaving the house. We’re always glancing at it and if the numbers are too high, we ask ourselves, “Did we leave the TV on? Lights upstairs? Left the A/C on?” The display in the kitchen is also a great for benchmarking different home gadgets because it shows you how much energy usage climbs when you turn them on. I’m a technology and data geek, so it doesn’t surprise anyone that this thing has changed my behavior. But my wife admits that it’s changed her behavior too. You can’t argue with the data!

2) Historical charting: all of the data collected is stored and uploaded to Google’s PowerMeter product. PowerMeter sends me weekly emails summarizing our energy consumption that week, compares it to previous weeks and compares my energy usage to similar sized homes with the same weather conditions.

The TED5000 kit I bought (the TED5000-C) cost me $240. You can read a more complete write-up on my blog at http://rake.sh/ted5000 and learn more about TED5000 on their website at http://www.theenergydetective.com.
Successful Post Oak blood drive!

Under warm breezy skies last week, Post Oak parents gathered to give blood at our first ever Post Oak Blood Drive. The drive was set up in response to the unexpected surgery for Post Oak parent Karen Swerdlin which resulted in the need for several pints of blood. “We were all grateful for the available supply which helped Karen, so we wanted to say thanks by giving back to the Houston blood supply,” said Post Oak parent Laura Citardi, one of the co-organizers of the drive. The Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center brought their state-of-the-art blood coach to our parking lot where Laura and co-drive organizer Tanya Gee, set up a relaxing “recovery center” tent next to it. Fifty-five people attempted to give blood, and of those, 42 were able to donate. That’s 42 pints toward the Blood Center’s daily goal of 1000 pints. Thanks to everyone who donated or attempted to donate. And thanks to Laura and Tanya for setting up the drive. One final happy note, Karen is recovering well and was there visiting with the folks sitting under the recovery tent.

Christina Cantu, Development Director

Photos by Shannon Neufeld
1. Practicing polishing.
2. An illustrated story.
3. Hand washing with a pitcher and bowl.
4. Addition with the stamp game.
5. Rolling up a work mat.

Photos by Shannon Neufeld
May Day 2010

Middle School student sang with the Children’s Chorus of the Houston Revelry in commemoration of May Day 2010 at Discovery Green last weekend. When members of the audience were invited to take part in the “Farmer’s Dance,” her sister Reagan was quick to join in.

The Great Post Oak Book Exchange

It’s time to start planning for summer reading. We will hold the Fifth Annual Great Post Oak Book Exchange on Wednesday, May 19th. Here’s how it works:

Elementary and Middle School students are invited to contribute books to the book exchange. Gently used books (must have front and back covers) are being collected in the library until May 18.

On May 19, students can come to the Reading Room where they will be given one Book Buck for each book donated. They may then shop for “new” books. Any books remaining after the exchange will be donated to a worthy cause. Now is the time to do some spring cleaning and get ready for summer reading!

Thanks,
B.R. Simon, Librarian

Houston Boychoir Spring Concert

When: Sunday, May 16, at 4:00 pm
Where: U of H, Moores Opera House, Ent. 16
WHO: Families and music lovers of all ages
COST: $7 children and $10 adults at door or www.houstonboychoir.com/tickets

Post Oak Lower Elementary student will perform in the spring concert with the Houston Boychoir (HBC) Preparatory Choir. At age 47, HBC, is one of Houston’s oldest arts organizations. The Spring Concert is a fully staged musical in the tradition of the Vienna Choir Boys. All three of the Houston Boychoir ensembles will perform: the Preparatory Choir, the Chamber Choir and the Men of the Houston Boychoir, an alumni group. The highlight of the concert will be the abridged version of the beloved family musical Oliver, by Lionel Bart.

New Elementary Parent gathering times

Thursday, May 20
Lower El: 6:30–7:15 pm
Upper El: 7:15–8:00 pm
NOTICE BOARD

Looking for a few YEARBOOK volunteers!

Parents: would you like to be part of the committee to design and create next year’s Post Oak yearbook?

Contact Christina Cantu at christinacantu@postoakschool.org

Thanks in advance!

Emergency Release Health Inquiry Forms are due May 17

You should have received yours this week. Please return it before the due date.

Upper Elementary History Fair

Everyone is welcome to attend this student event which will start at 7:00 pm in the gym.

Middle School will also present an archeologist’s perspective of the Montessori experience.

ABOUT THE WEEKLY POST

The Weekly Post appears on most Fridays of the regular school year. You can receive a printed copy from your oldest child, or a PDF version online.

Submit letters, articles, or photos in electronic form by 5:00 pm on the Tuesday before publication to Communications Coordinator Shannon Neufeld (shannonneufeld@postoakschool.org). If publication is on a Thursday due to school closure on Friday, then the deadline is 5:00 pm on the preceding Monday.

All photos in The Weekly Post are by Shannon Neufeld unless otherwise noted.

The Post Oak School was founded in 1963 and accredited by both the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) and the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS)

4600 Bissonnet, Bellaire, Texas 77401  •  Telephone: 713-661-6688  •  Fax: 713-661-4959  •  www.postoakschool.org

CALENDAR

For more, visit www.postoakschool.org

MAY 16–22

Wed 05/19

Upper Elementary History Fair
7:00–8:00 pm

Thu 05/20

New Elementary Parent gathering
Lower El 6:30–7:15 pm
Upper El 7:15–8:00 pm

MAY 23–29

Wed-Thur 05/26-27

Middle School visits the Retreat at Artesian Lakes

Thu 05/27

Buddha Day

Fri 05/28

Last day of school
Early dismissal:
IC & PRI at 11:30 am
EL & MS at 12:00 pm
Graduation
6:30 pm

MAY 30–JUNE 5

Mon 05/31

Memorial Day
School Closed—no childcare

Tue-Thur 06/01-03

Teacher In-Service Days

JUNE 6–12

Mon 06/07

Summer School Begins

Keep track of school events with our online calendar—or download a fresh copy of the school’s printed calendar, all at

http://www.postoakschool.org