



THE RHOADES SCHOOL™

Dear Fifth Grade Parents,

There will be a parent-only, informational meeting on **October 7, 2019** from 6:00-6:45 pm in the auditorium regarding our annual adventure through New Mexico. The 2020 Southwest Indian Field Trip (SWIFT) takes place from April 27 to May 1, 2020. At this meeting, we will discuss the many benefits of the trip, student preparedness, chaperons, costs, trip logistics and the important process of deciding if your child is ready for this opportunity. If you have questions that you would be more comfortable asking privately, please connect with Mr. Molenkamp, Mrs. Osborn or Mr. Nolan through e-mail or a phone call.

This trip and associated curriculum are carefully planned to help students gain extensive knowledge of and respect for the historic, artistic, religious and economic aspects of a different culture. This experience also allows students to gain independence and confidence as they face physical and social challenges beyond those normally found in the classroom or at home. Personal accountability takes on increased importance during our journey as students pack their own bags, help serve meals, start campfires, navigate hikes and organize unfamiliar living spaces away from home. Participants also enjoy learning about the geology and the flora and fauna of the varied ecosystems we explore. To maximize independence, this trip is chaperoned by adults other than 5th grade parents, and students may call home only once during the trip. Experience has shown that the trip's full potential is enhanced when parents demonstrate faith in their student's ability to manage these challenges on their own.

We start our adventure by flying to Albuquerque where we will be met by a professional charter bus to be transported to the many historic and contemporary American Indian sites we have frequented for over 30 years. Each evening, we will be staying in bunkhouses at the Ghost Ranch which is ideally located near sites we visit <https://www.ghostranch.org/>. Ghost Ranch and the surrounding areas are often depicted in Georgia O'Keeffe's artwork which will be studied throughout the year with Mrs. DiGrazia. Meals, evening campfires, day hikes, night hikes and even a world famous, on-site dinosaur dig are some of the activities we will enjoy at Ghost Ranch.

Trip logistics are arranged by Grand Classroom, a well-regarded student travel service that arranges for all transportation, lodging, meals, activities and medical insurance. Our arrangement with Grand Classroom has been very positive. They also provide two seasoned guides who are well trained in outdoor activities and working with students in the great outdoors. Additional chaperons include Mr. Molenkamp, Mrs. Osborn, Mr. Nolan and several Rhoades School community volunteers. Please click on the following link to register your student for this trip by **October 19, 2019**. <http://grandclassroom.com/>

Although Native American Studies is an integral part of the Rhoades School 5th grade curriculum, the trip itself is optional. We are very respectful of each family's wishes regarding participation, and we promote this same respect for choice amongst our students. It is a privilege to prepare our students for life's challenges in partnership with you. Each day, we hear echoes from home which enhance our lessons about kindness, perseverance, curiosity and living life with purpose. This trip is another opportunity to reinforce such valuable, life-long traits.

Sincerely,

Syd Molenkamp
Jeff Nolan
Erica Osborn