



THE DOGWOOD DIGEST

A weekly highlight of what our forest schoolers explored, learned, played, created, & so much more!

Winter Term: Week 2 - January 15 - 21, 2024

It was a cold one this week but in true forest school spirit, we made the absolute best of the situation. We used the cold temperatures to our advantage when building ice slides and let the snow guide our learning. We appreciated the warmth of the Den and Tipi fires and built up our resilience and perseverance when facing challenges. Sometimes we begin our day with one plan but between our curiosities, passions, and what the forest has to offer that day, plans change in the best way possible!

Seeds (5-7 years)

- Explored the frozen streams and “skated” on them when they were thick enough
- Began learning sewing basics in the warm Den - we punched holes in cardstock paper and used plastic needles to practice the running stitch around shapes
- Created mini forts and structures out of ice and snow
- Played on the snow slide, taking turns sliding down
- Created a snow slide by melting snow over the fire and pouring water on the slide then giving it time to freeze (water cycle and changes in matter!)
- Listened to a story about Bear’s winter nap and moved around the forest to follow his adventure
- Practiced positive communication and problem solving skills when working with others
- Hiked through the forest, finding lots of deer scat and tracks - we even came across a collection of feathers on the ground, trying to figure out what happened to the bird

Sprouts (7-10 years)

- Introduced helper hedgehogs as a job - two Sprouts went to the den to help the seeds with their community jobs
- Brainstormed and discussed how to keep safe and warm in the cold
- Discovered how animal tracks are stories written in the snow - we can learn all about that animal (what it looks like, what it eats, how it moves, where it likes to go, etc.) all by “reading” it’s tracks
- Played an animal track memory game, matching the animal track to its name
- Hiked through the forest finding familiar and unfamiliar tracks - we spent a long time following fisher tracks, noticing that it was hunting for rabbits, dug in the snow and crossed the creek (true example of the level of focus and patience these forest schoolers have developed with time)
- Played a game called “Open Season” and “Sardines”
- Continued whittling projects

Forest Rangers (11-14 years)

- Reviewed and played track ID roulette
- Discovered over 8 different animal tracks in the wetlands and enjoyed a sit spot in a sunny patch
- Analyzed and tested our physical and mental strength and strategy in a game of Open Season
- Warmed up in the tipi and created mug snugs by sewing fabric that fit around a mason jar, then enjoyed some hot cocoa we made and warmed over the fire

Monthly Sprouts (6-9 years)

- Worked as a team to carry logs to use for fires at the fire circle and in the den
- Melted snow to create “soup” with birch bark and cedar leaves
- Used the melted snow on the snow slide that we spent time sliding down
- Played a matching track game, and discovered rabbit, squirrel, dog, and deer tracks on our hike
- Hiked to High Point and from there we followed a deer track off trail that led us to Mushroom Valley
- Played sardines at the Berry Patch

Monthly Saplings (9-13 years)

- Had a long hike through the snow where we stopped halfway for a sit spot - we listened for movement in the forest, felt the snowflakes falling on our faces, rested and re-energized for the hike back, and looked for more tracks
- Carried wood to the tipi to build a fire and a cozy place to warm up from the cold
- Crafted, making mug snugs using knots and simple running stitches
- Played a Mancala tournament in the warm tipi
- Built snowshoes out of thin branches, sawing and tying knots

Although it was a colder week, we didn’t let it stop us from exploring and playing. In fact, the cold helped guide us to new adventures, learning and discoveries about our community, our selves, and the forest. We are excited for next week when we can continue practicing and building on skills we have been developing!



Climbing to great heights for a full view of the forest



Exploring the wetland area and finding tracks to follow



Melting snow over the fire to create water to ice the snow slide



Sawing a branch to begin creating a snowshoe



Carrying logs to the tipi to build a fire and create a warm space – community efforts that benefit all!



Exploring ice thickness of a flooded area in the forest



Matching images of tracks to animal names to test our knowledge



Continuing to practice our sewing skills, this time with a plastic needle



If you look close enough, you may find a rainbow trapped inside the ice block



Rabbit tracks!



Balancing on a log (building core strength, practicing patience and focus, developing communication)



The famous snowslide that was a hit for any group at the Den this week!



The final product – snowshoes complete!



Hiking through the snowy forest



Bear climbing is fun!



More rabbit tracks – what a perfect example



Community chats on the play pyramids



Bear walking on an adventure



More ice assessment at the creek



An interesting scene we stumbled upon with feathers and disturbed ground – we had to be detectives to figure out what might have happened