

How Was Your Summer?



Did you have a good summer? That's a question often asked as we come back to school in August. We had a great summer in ELL – staff and students alike. Let me share about our summer with some cool stories and pictures.

We had about 260 ELLs in Summer School in June. Of course, our first goal is to help students continue their English language learning through speaking, listening, reading, and writing. We also want to help kids catch up academically, grow in social skills, and learn about our community.

English Learners learn best in theme based, holistic school environments. To that end, staff teams at each grade level start their prep process by working together to develop a theme and brainstorming appropriate field trips. Themes this year:

- High School at Eielson: Exploring Our Community. Their field trip to Bonanzaville was a favorite. The history the students saw there brought back stories of their experiences in their own countries.
- Middle Level at Eielson: Past, Present, and Future. This theme built on the mainstream geography curriculum and standards. At the Hjemkomst, they learned about immigration and cultures.
- Elementary at Jefferson: Air. Who knew you could spend 4 weeks studying AIR! The students learning that air has pressure and takes up space. They also learned what happens when air is cooled or heated (it contracts or expands). Flying kites at the park was another fun way to experience air.
- Elementary at Kennedy: Animals. These students got to read with service dogs, meet a police officer with his dog partner, and go to a farm. We are grateful to people from around the community who help the ELs have first time experiences such as this.

Another highlight was celebrating World Refugee Day in June. The High School and Middle Level students hosted the elementary kids at Carl Ben Eielson. Teachers and students from past years enjoy reconnecting and the little ones like seeing their big sisters, brothers, and cousins. I find it heartwarming to see the care and concern the “big kids” have for the little ones.

Learning by Doing continued the experiential learning for our Level 1 and 2 Middle School and Elementary ELs in July. About 60 students got up to come to school on warm July mornings. This smaller program is targeted for our Newcomers. They have the opportunity to learn and practice English in an environment that's safe for risk-taking. Themes were:

- Middle Level at Discovery: Transportation: Past, Present, and Future. The teachers worked together to develop their program based on science experiments that lead to reading and writing assignments and computer work. A favorite field trip was to the MSUM Planetarium. Middle Level kids would love to take a trip into outer space!
- Elementary at Lewis and Clark: Healthy Bodies: Foods We Eat, My Body, Marvelous Me. They had visits from a dentist and nutritionist. The ELLs also visited a grocery store and saw the inside of an ambulance.

We had a very good summer. How was your summer? Here's hoping you also learned, had fun, and came back in August feeling more confident and ready for another year!

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