

Dear Watershed Community,

In the past 36 hours our students returned from orientation trips – the middle school yesterday and the high school today. I love the returns – hearing the stories, seeing the smiles, and seeing the growth in our students and in their relationships with one another. It is also a time that I am in awe of our educators – the energy, focus, and love they put into the work of leading students on camping and backpacking trips is inspiring.

The middle school had great trips to Great Sand Dunes National Park (6th and 7th grade) and to Leadville (8th grade). The 6th and 7th graders spent time learning to work together, they celebrated and appreciated one another, and they had fun in the sand! I had the pleasure of joining the 8th grade for part of their trip. It was great to see them exploring and embracing the challenges of leadership, to see them working together at camp, and to hike with them up to a sub-alpine lake. They are an impressive group!

As many of you know, the high school backpacking trips faced a lot of rain (and lightning, and hail...). It was especially gratifying to see the smiles upon their return – hear them laugh about the challenges they faced and express awe at the super blue moon, and see the growing bonds of community in the groups. Backpacking trips are wonderful for building community because it is so clear how much we all depend on one another, how much our individual actions support the group.

As I said above, I love the returns. And perhaps most of all for the hugs. Siblings hugging, parents and children hugging, students from the day trips hugging returning friends, educators and their partners hugging. These are real hugs. Hugs that linger. It fills my heart.



Thanks for reading.

Warmly,

Tim