



## Embracing Winter Experiences Part 1 by Sabrina Carlson

On February 16, 2017, 31 sixth grade students from Sinagua Middle School traveled to the Arizona Nordic Village for a day of fun, camaraderie, and learning about the joys of getting outside... even in the middle of winter.

It was a perfect day. There had been enough snow to have a good base to glide on but was a warm and sunny day with

gorgeous bluebird skies. Often our biggest challenge with outings in the winter is the potential for wet, cold feet. With the packed trails and rented skis these issues were taken care of! Thanks to the warm sunny day, we had more students getting too hot than too cold.

After getting checked in and outfitted with gear, we all headed out on a short green loop together to experience the day as a class and get a feel for the equipment. Those in the front of the pack learned how to correctly “bump up” a group when there are lots of people and different abilities. Those in the back of the group worked on their equipment management skills and how to move most efficiently with really long feet.

As we rounded the corner to return to the lodge for lunch, students who wanted to test their speed lined up to race back to the picnic tables. Having watched some of the “front of the pack” students already, we had a brief chat about “going fast by going slow.” If you move so fast you are getting your skis crossed and falling down a lot, you may not really go as fast as you want to.

After lunch we allowed the students to self-select into groups that wanted to move a bit faster, groups that wanted to go a moderate speed, and those that wanted to ski a shorter distance a little slower.



Leading the faster group, I headed out to climb one of the nearest trails with a bit of a hill. This group wanted a challenge and had plenty of energy to burn. By the time we reached the top of the hill everyone seemed to be in agreement that hill climbing is pretty hard and they were excited to ski back down the hill. It came as a surprise to most, especially the students who are proficient alpine skiers, how much harder descending on Nordic skis can be! There was laughter, a few falls, and a genuine sense of surprise that it took us longer to get everyone down the hill than it did to get up!

We all gathered together again before heading back to school. One young lady who had been much too intimidated by alpine skiing to do it again found herself



enjoying Nordic skiing more than she expected. Everyone seemed to have a great time and learned a lot about themselves and winter fun in the process.



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