

Tomorrow morning the fifth grade sets off for its over night trip to Pennsylvania. First we head up to Ashland to visit the Pioneer Mine and Mining Museum. Learning about how anthracite coal was mined is very interesting. Instead of the coal being deposited in horizontal layers like in West Virginia, the folding of the earth in large parts of Pennsylvania means that the miners actually worked in vertical shafts and dug their way to the surface of the earth. We take a train into the mine and then get to see how the shafts were created with timber supports. Part of the fifth grade curriculum deals with the industrialization of the United States and the development of the coal industry was a big part of that process.

Later that day we retrace our steps and head to Gettysburg. That evening and the entire next day is spent learning about that pivotal battle and seeing where it was fought. With a generation of young people who have now grown up on video games, the idea the armies could line up across a field and just bombard each other to oblivion is very foreign. They get the idea of hiding in the rocks at Little Round Top, but Pickett's Charge across the wheat field is pretty unbelievable. We visit the new Gettysburg visitor's center and then head out to the battlefield with a team of guides. With the 150th anniversary of the battle in July, 2013, lots of preparations are going on to welcome what will surely be a huge number of Civil War enactors. If you haven't been to Gettysburg recently to see what the Park Service has done for visitors, I highly encourage you making the trip.

While we are gone, the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children will be participating in Field Day. For the past few weeks, Ms. Perll, Ms. McClure and Mr. Jackson have been designing a morning of fun activities that will get our littlest students up and running, jumping and hopping. There will be water activities, climbing activities and jumping games. By the time lunch rolls around, most will be pretty tired but will be so happy with everything they have gotten to do. This is also the day that the fourth grade will be helpers at a number of the stations.

Then after the fifth grade returns, Friday will be Field Day for everyone else. Everyone has been hard at work getting ready for this day. Classes have been designing their own special Field Day t-shirts to wear. Teachers have been learning how to silk screen shirts to make them extra special. The morning will be spent again in a wide variety of stations with all kinds of physical challenges to complete. Then in the afternoon will be the relay races, tug of wars, and finally the water balloon toss. In many ways this is one of our most organizationally intense days of the school year with over 550 kids running from place to place. But somehow it all falls into place each year and this becomes another high point in the school year.

When Ms. McClure received an award as a finalist for teacher of the year, her acceptance speech contained a section that really resonated with me. She talked about the importance of all the brain work that children do each day at school. The reading, writing and arithmetic, the critical thinking skills, the science and social studies. But she reminded the audience that evening that the brain is connected to a body and that body needs to grow and develop, too. So we have a physical education program that is a

model for the city. We have visitors come to watch classes and our teachers participate in providing professional development activities for their fellow teachers.

So this week we will get our sneakers out and our t-shirt on and get out on that field and have a good time moving our bodies and making our spirits soar. We will cheer each other on when the races begin and will laugh when we burst our balloons. This really is one of the most fun days of all. And when it is all over, this adult will head home and probably collapse for the rest of the weekend. We'll still have two weeks to go. And just looking at the calendar, we're only about half way through the end of school marathon!