

5/26/2006

Dear Shumla School Staff,

I begin with an apology for not writing sooner. School was out yesterday, and quite honestly, things have been so very hectic since we visited your school that I never found the time I needed to write to you.

Since returning from "the most awesome school trip ever", we began an intense review of all Science concepts in order to prepare for the Science TAKS Test. I have to say that each day during these lessons I made reference to some aspect of our trip, whether it be Earth, Life, Physical, or the Nature of Science. I am very passionate about teaching Science and believe that the best learning occurs when students experience it. Well, our kids were making connections left and right! Now they really *understood* the concept of force and friction because the(y) experienced it at Shumla. Sure we had done plenty of hands-on activities in the classroom, but this is the one that did it! We reviewed sound and vibration, they knew! I kept hearing about the crazy dancing we did to the beat of the drums! I can go on and on (believe me, it's difficult for me to be brief) about the great experiences your staff at Shumla afforded us, and the impact it had on our learning. The lessons learned were key to understanding the concepts that are taught in our 5th grade curriculum.

I am also very grateful to Dr. Carolyn Boyd (and Jack & Angel) for accompanying us to Seminole Canyon State Park. Our kids loved the tour and again, learned so much. It's a very humbling experience to learn of our past ancestors and their struggle to survive off the land.

Well, here's the good news. Our scores at Seco Mines Elementary for the Science TAKS went up a whopping 28% from the previous year!!!! I can say with complete conviction that at least part of that increase was due to the dedication of such a wonderful staff and the powerful lessons that they taught us. I truly thank you for that.

I admire your vision and dedication to our youth and I am very grateful to you for affording us this experience. My students were well aware that other people, including a very generous anonymous donor, made this all possible for us. We would like to extend our thanks to these donors for their unbelievable dedication to a bunch of kids they don't even know. Let them know, please, that their generosity was well appreciated.

We included your school in our end-of-year ceremony by preparing a special certificate of appreciation to you. Again, thank you, and we hope to be on your calendar next year with a new set of kids.

Sincerely,

Margaret K. Diego

5th Grade Teachers

Seco Mines Elementary