

RIVERSTONE

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

To: New Riverstone Families
From: Ben Brock, Outdoor Program Director
Re: Back-to-School Campouts and Outdoor Programming

Dear New Riverstone Families,

First of all, welcome to Riverstone! I'm excited to have a new set of faces joining the community and am looking forward to getting to know some of those faces this fall up in the mountains on the Middle and Upper School back-to-school campouts and on the Lower School rafting trips!

I know that among the new families there will be a range of experiences when it comes to exploring the outdoors. For those of you who are seasoned explorers, I'm excited to have you help teach the rest of the community about how to be comfortable and safe in the mountains and on the rivers. Feel free to let me know about the things you've done and the places you've explored; I'm always excited to learn about new trips and adventures. For those of you that are novices when it comes to hiking, backpacking, rafting, skiing, etc., not to worry. The faculty at Riverstone is chock-full of seasoned outdoor enthusiasts and we are committed to making the Outdoor Program fun and accessible to all students. We have experienced raft guides, fishing guides, emergency medical technicians, adventure racers, triathletes, kayakers, and backcountry skiers, to give you an idea. All of these staff members are great resources if you ever have questions about an activity or a trip.

The Back to School Trips

The first experiences with the Riverstone Outdoor Program are a great way for new students to get to know their new community a little better. During the first week of school, all Elementary School students float the Main Payette River with Cascade Outfitters. Students in grades K-2 float the Lower Main Payette, a calm section of the river that is very appropriate for young children, and parents are encouraged to accompany their child(ren). Students in Grades 3-5 float a more exciting, upper stretch of the Main Payette, and are treated to bigger splashes in a few Class III rapids. By floating with some of their new classmates in paddle boats, new students get to know some new faces and bond immediately through a common experience. It is a trip that is talked about for the rest of the year.

During the second week of school, students in Grades 7-12 head to the Sawtooth and White Cloud Mountains for three days. They are broken into groups of ten to twelve students with two teachers. Each group hikes between two to six miles to remote, backcountry lakes including Alice Lake, 4th of July Lake, Farley Lake and others. After setting up a small base camp, students day-hike to other lakes and saddles in the area and sometimes climb a nearby, non-technical peak. For Grade 7 students, the trip is their first backcountry school trip; students in Grades 9 & 10 help show them the ropes, and Juniors and Seniors assist the trip chaperones as student leaders. The trip is a great way for new students to meet classmates they will have in many of their classes, students in other grades, and teachers that they might not otherwise get to know in the classrooms. The trip is one of the highlights of the year and a great way to kick things off.

Students in Grade 6 will be treated to a new fall outdoor program experience this year. Traditionally they have traveled to the Yellowstone area as part of the school's Spring Trip program. This year, however, that trip will take place in the fall to take advantage of better weather and access to more trails. Based at Harriman State Park, students will go on numerous day hikes, acquiring skills they

will need on future outdoor trips and expanding on topics covered during the first several weeks in science class.

As a result of these various excursions at the beginning of school, new students feel that they are an important part of the community and have laid the foundations for some significant and lasting relationships.

Other Trips During the Year

Throughout the rest of the year, various winter and spring trips will challenge and reward students of all grades. Snowshoeing trips, winter yurt trips, desert camping trips, and the much-anticipated Spring Trips all serve to bring students and teachers together into a tight community, and to expand horizons beyond the classroom. Feel free to contact me at any time with questions about trips for specific grades.

Getting Ready for the Back-to-School Trips

For the Lower School raft trip, a swimsuit, water-shoes and sunscreen are all that a child will need. Lifejackets are provided and, if it's cold, wetsuits and splash jackets are available. Classroom teachers will help get students ready for these trips and send home parent sign-up forms as well as instructions and directions. These will be sent out during the first week of school.

Middle and Upper School trips require a bit more preparation. Weather in the Sawtooth Mountains can change on a dime and warm, sunny weather can turn cold, wet, and even snowy, in a matter of minutes. All students will need a sleeping bag and sleeping pad as well as good, non-cotton, warm clothes, good rain gear, and sturdy footwear. Trip equipment lists describe more explicitly what items are needed, but synthetic materials that insulate even when wet are paramount. Students in Grades 7-12 need backpacking packs; see the enclosed equipment list for guidelines. Riverstone can rent sleeping bags, sleeping pads and backpacks for students that do not own these items; families will be billed for these items. Riverstone provides food, cooking stoves, water filters and any necessary tents.

Middle and Upper School trip meetings will take place at school prior to the trips. Tent groups, menus, trip goals and equipment needs will all be covered.

A Quick Note about Forms

**Medical forms, permission-to-treat forms, and emergency contact forms are all very important pieces of information that enable Riverstone teachers to ensure that students are safe while they are on Outdoor Program trips, not to mention on campus. Please take the time to fill these forms out completely and accurately. Five miles from a trailhead is a tough place to learn that a student has asthma, is allergic to bees, has chronic problems with sprained ankles, or just had an appendix removed. With the right information, these and other issues can all be addressed and everyone can have a safe experience in the backcountry.

The Outdoor Program is an important component of the educational experience that Riverstone International School provides. I look forward to helping you make the most out of it! Contact me at school during the summer if you have any questions regarding activities, expectations or equipment. School is just around the corner and before we know it, we'll be on the rivers and in the mountains together.

Until then, enjoy summer!

Ben Brock
Director, Outdoor Program