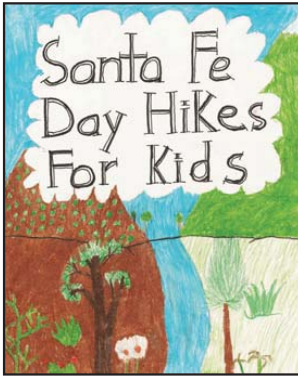


Writing Kids!

Young Santa Fe Students Publish Hiking Guide Book

by NICOLE BLOUIN

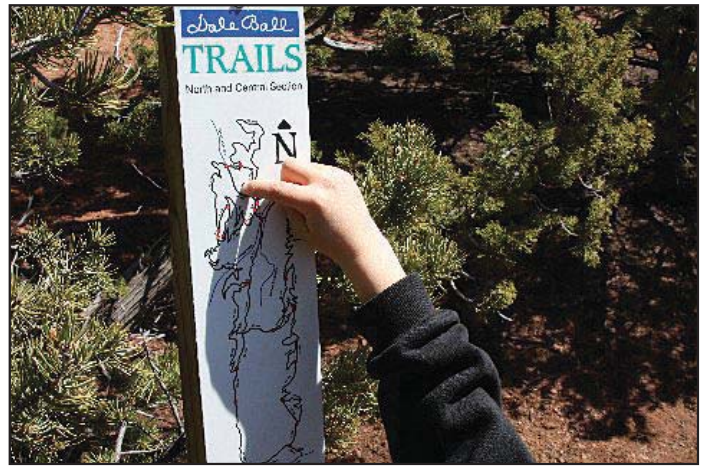


If you walk into Sangre de Cristo Mountainworks or REI in Santa Fe, you can purchase a unique area guidebook written for kids, by kids. Students from Santa Fe School for Arts and Sciences (SFSAS) published a book called *Santa Fe Day Hikes for Kids*. "It surprised me that our 3rd and 4th grade class actually made a trail guide that got published," says Noa Noa Laget Hudson, who was part of Todd Stiewing's class that put the book together.

Stiewing came up with the idea after teaching wilderness camps at the school. "I wanted to expose our kids to the exciting and interesting world that

comes to life on our local trails."

At SFSAS, students are learning by doing. The hiking guide project integrated language arts, math, science, art, wilderness skills and community service. "We worked on this project over the course of 10 weeks," says Stiewing. "We would do weekly lessons on such topics as weather, topography and map skills, flora and fauna, distance and measurement, data collection and research writing. Our field work included 10 trips as a whole class to collect data from each trail." The book describes 10 trails and each hike was researched by the authors and



A student studies the trailside map for the Dale Ball Trails. Courtesy Photo.

hiked several times in different weather. The students even did one hike on their own outside of school.

"The most fun for me was the hiking part," says Noa, "going around and looking at all the nature." Kai Taishoff liked the cool rocks and plants along the trails. Sina Kindane liked the quiet. "Some hikes were silent hikes," she explains, "and we got to listen to the wilderness."

All the photos, illustrations and hand-drawn maps were also done by the students. "They were involved in almost all the aspects of the project," Stiewing said. "They were the researchers, the photographers, editors, layout and graphic designers, as well the authors of the entire guide." The students also decided that half the proceeds go to outdoor organizations and half to the class to fund future expeditions.

You'll find tips on what to pack and how to pack, including how not to "smush" your sandwich and whether rain gear should go at the top or the bottom of your bag. The trail safety section ranges from how to cross a stream to what to do if you encounter certain plants or animals. For example, under "Scorpions," the kids advise checking your shoes before you put them on.

The students also included information about weather and map reading skills. "I learned how to follow a map accurately," says Alicia Stewart, "and I learned what everything means on the map, which will really help in the future if I hike again." Sina, who was surprised by how much she didn't know about hiking, says, "I discovered that when hiking near a river, if you get lost, you can just follow the river."

"This (educational) model challenges students to excel," explains Rayna Dineen, SFSAS principal and co-founder. "It is connected to real life situations and audiences and the students take responsibility for their own learning." Dineen said additional skills learned through the project include critical thinking, problem-solving and craftsmanship.

"The kids begin to see that what they are learning and doing actually matters, and that they can make a difference in their life, their community and sometimes, in the world," Dineen adds.

Putting a book together is not an easy task. "It was surprising how challenging it was to write the directions," says Alicia. "You don't want people to get lost on your trail."

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Sina Kindane and Chime Dolker pose at the trailhead sign in Black Canyon. Courtesy Photo.