

IN THE MIDDLE:

Pioneer day will be a real learning experience

By Lauren Goolsby

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The Gifted and Talented classes of Krueger Middle School are going to build a pioneer day for visiting fourth graders from the MCAS elementary schools.

This will not be like our environmental days that we do with all grades and all schools. This will be more about Indiana history and how settlers and Native Americans lived before electricity, modern-day pollution, and some of the conveniences we have come to rely on in today's society. Krueger's activities aren't going to be just another copy compared to other pioneer days. Students will experience hands-on



learning about the settlers' lifestyles, jobs, ways of communication, and more.

The school has even applied for grants to be able to purchase two kid-size looms and an adult size loom, so fourth grade students can see how pioneers made their clothes and blankets. We also are looking into buying a spinning wheel to see how the yarn is made in the first place, hopefully making yarn using real wool from animals. Even though my GT classmates and I don't know how to do these things yet, we are excited and anxious to learn! Some of our activities will include candle dipping, a mail call, and even showing the kids how compost works.

For a visual effect of how times have changed, former teacher Dianne Lindenmeyer will be sewing costumes for students to wear. Some KMS students will wear traditional pioneer and Native American clothing while other middle school students will be dressed in today's modern apparel. Also for a way for the visitors to interact as if they are "back in

the day," the two GT classes are going to write letters pretending to be settlers and Native Americans, writing to the fourth grades from the past. Ms. Good, my GT Humanities class teacher, has contacted the fourth grade teachers to invite their classes to correspond with the "pioneers."

To make the environment and area around us look as if real settlers or Pottawatomie Indians are living here at Krueger, we are going to build a Pottawatomie wigwam. Student architect Logan Haas, an eighth grade student in the Humanities class, is going to build a scale model of the wigwam and design a full-sized one. This type of shelter is built from nothing but the supplies provided by the land you are surrounded by. A wigwam looks like a dome, or an igloo made from sticks, mud, corn husks, and even deer skins.

We want to use the looms to learn how to make clothes and blankets and have some kids learning that skill. With the spinning wheel, if kids can get the hang of that, they can actually make yarn out of wool.

Another part of this learning experience is going to be a composting pile. Also, we will be building a covered wagon, like the ones pioneers used to travel in.

This hands-on learning should ignite interest in both the environment and the history of our great state. The Gifted and Talented classes at Krueger Middle School have already begun learning by planning these hands-on activities, and we are hopeful that our younger peers will enjoy the experience as much as we have so far!

Lauren Goolsby is a student at Krueger Middle School. In the Middle is a regular column which is produced by middle school students in the Michigan City Area Schools.