

Sixth Grade to the Cosmos!

Guest Writer: Carter Manteuffel



Sixth Grade travelled to the Cosmosphere in Hutchinson, Kansas, where we trained for space exploration! One exciting part of the trip experience was the choice of scuba lessons or going up in a glider plane. Both were meant to simulate what astronauts experience. The scuba mimics neutral buoyancy, and the gliders replicate the flight training astronauts need for space travel. Theo, Colton, and Montgomery all said that scuba diving was an amazing experience and would do it again. Glider planes were equally fun where students got to fly above the clouds in an engineless aircraft.

We also got to train with astronaut Dottie Metcalf-Lindenburger while performing space training with a centrifuge and a Multi-Axis-Trainer, which spun us upside down and sideways, creating a fun simulation of an out-of-control rocket. The centrifuge went up to 4Gs and was an amazing experience not being able to move our bodies while spinning. Students also got the chance to go into a Russian Soyuz capsule simulator that real astronauts used to train.

Other highlights at the Cosmosphere were the simulations. We participated in a space capsule launch, and Mission Control. Inside the capsule, we acted as astronauts, communicating with Mission Control back on the ground. In Mission Control, students took on real NASA roles such as

CAPCOM (Capsule Communicator) or PROP (Propulsion Officer). Rooney said, "I loved Mission Control because I was PROP, and it was fun because I did math. I also loved the capsule because it was really fun talking to CAPCOM, and I got to experience the thrill of controlling a rocket."

Another highlight of the trip was the museum tour. We explored the Cosmosphere's world-class space museum, which features a wide variety of space and rocket artifacts—from World War II to the Apollo missions. Leo said, "I thought it was interesting to hear about the history and evolution of rockets and people going to space during the museum tour."

The shining star event at the Cosmosphere was the Mars Settlement mission. Students had roles such as Ambassador or Roboticist. During this activity, students would complete tasks assigned to their role to establish civilization on Mars. If they completed their tasks, they received resource cards. The team with the most resource cards was the winner.



Check out these miners!

While learning about rockets and astronauts, students also got to go 650 ft underground in the Strataca Salt Mine. Because it is a safe place to store priceless artifacts, students also got to see props from movies in Strataca's vault such as Superman's costume. Students also got to meet Clare Vanderpool, the author of one of the books we read in class. Finally, to wrap up our amazing adventure, students had a nice family style lunch at Carriage Crossing in an Amish community before flying home.

The trip to the Cosmosphere was an amazing experience that the 6th graders will keep in their memories for years to come and hope that future 6th graders will also get to travel to the cosmos!



Our 6th Graders at the out-of-this-world Space Museum!