



PARKWAY SIXTH-GRADE OUTDOOR SCHOOL PROGRAM
"Planting seeds and growing young minds for a healthier world"

Dear Sixth-Grade Parent,

Your child is in for a memorable, meaningful, educational experience this upcoming school year in Parkway. Each year, sixth-grade students experience learning in a whole new world as the classroom moves from indoor classrooms at the middle schools into outdoor learning spaces at Camp Lakewood. Camp Lakewood, part of the YMCA of the Ozarks (near Potosi, Missouri), has been the site of the Parkway Outdoor School program for over 50 years. It is considered a model program for environmental experiential education throughout the United States and has served over 65,000 Parkway sixth graders since it began in the fall of 1970. Many students find Outdoor School to be one of the "highlights" of their Parkway experience.

It is our goal for the sixth grade students to experience camp. We are working with Camp Lakewood to ensure the safety of our students is the number one priority. This includes extensive cleaning of cabins and common areas, and following the district health and safety protocols.

Parkway teachers and the YMCA staff work together to create an educational program that gives students a better understanding of nature, furthers their knowledge of environmental education through hands-on activities, and builds the school community by strengthening student relationships. Outdoor School enhances student learning of the world they live in, shapes the sense of community in the school, and increases individual confidence. Our hope is also that our students will experience the wonders of our natural world, develop an appreciation for nature, and see the value of their contributions to a healthy environment.

This year, The Outdoor School experience is a Four-day, three-night field trip, beginning on Monday or Tuesday and ending Thursday or Friday. Your child will attend Outdoor School with their middle school team during the fall or spring semester. The students will be transported to Camp Lakewood on Parkway buses and will be cared for and led by a combination of Parkway teachers, YMCA staff members, and trained high school students who serve as group leaders. Each cabin group (10 -12 students) will have an adult staff member and high school student (Cabin Leader) specifically assigned to help ensure that your child's personal welfare and educational experience are maximized. A certified Parkway nurse will also be on-site 24 hours a day throughout the week to tend to your child's medical needs. Overnight, security patrols the area to ensure all students are safe.

While at Camp Lakewood, students are involved in a prescribed curriculum of science-based field lessons and special outdoor education activities, along with group/team activities and the responsibilities and tasks of daily living. Program activities are selected to meet the following criteria:

1. Lessons from all subject areas or disciplines are integrated;
2. A majority of activities are conducted outdoors; and
3. An environmental theme is emphasized throughout all lessons and activities.

The Parkway School District and the sixth-grade families share the costs of the Outdoor School program. A program fee (\$275) is assessed per student, which covers the cost of lodging (3 nights), meals, transportation, and other student expenses. More information on how to make this payment online will be available in a pre-camp packet given by your team's director. The payment will be collected prior to your child's week of Outdoor School (see attached schedule).

A payment plan can be requested to help disperse the cost of the program and make payments more manageable (contact Parkway Finance Department at 314-415-8055. Also, a financial assistance program is available for families with financial limitations or unforeseen financial difficulties (see your school team's director for assistance application). **Applications for financial assistance (up to \$100) for all fall and spring sessions are due prior to your camp start date (See attached schedule).**

You will be receiving more information about your child's experience at Camp Lakewood and payment information from the child's team staff at your middle school. Questions regarding special student accommodations, scheduling, and most other details will be shared by your child's school. I extend best wishes to you and your child for an exciting new year in middle school and particularly for an enriching Outdoor School experience.

Sincerely,

Dr. Eddie Mattison
PE/Health/Outdoor School Coordinator