



## Riding Into a New School Year

by Sabrina Carlson

On August 19, 2016, nine members of the Flagstaff Junior Academy and their teacher Neil Ross, headed out on the first club ride of the 2016/2017 school year.

We began the meeting in Mr. Ross's classroom. Since it was the first ride of the year, we

needed to cover a variety of topics such as safety, trail etiquette, body positions, passing and how to check, adjust and lube your bike appropriately. This absorbed a significant amount of our time together and it was time well spent to ensure that everyone knew what to expect for all of the club's future rides and activities.

As we finally launched from the FJA Middle School Campus, the afternoon monsoon clouds were looming but quiet. We took the Flagstaff Urban Trail network through the "Y" parking lot past the dirt jumps and to the official Schultz Creek Trailhead (Flagstaff, Passage 33).

As we rode, many of the returning club members would speed ahead to the predetermined stopping places, while younger and newer riders were finding their bike legs. While waiting for their club mates, the more experienced riders practiced their technical skills and I had the joy of giving them some pointers on how and when to use the different kinds of wheelies.



Gideon works his pedal punch wheelie



Riding through a field of sunflowers!

One of the brand new club members had brought a very heavy and mechanically unsuitable bike to ride. He struggled mightily to pedal his bike even the short and technically simple 2+ miles to the trailhead. Mr. Ross and I both assured him that HE was riding very well and that the bike itself was the problem. He tried to take in the message to heart but was still quite frustrated. We had him try another rider's bike for a minute so that he could experience what we were telling him. Instantly a huge grin spread over his face and he said, "Wow! This is completely different!" He seemed to truly release any remaining

self-doubt and got very excited at the idea of borrowing one of the school bikes for the next ride.

Once at the trailhead, the dark clouds were beginning to rumble and rain was soon to fall. So, we only had time for a super short single track loop before heading back to school. Though the ride was short, everyone learned something and left eager for the next time we could pedal bikes together!



Cam catching some air!



This outing was made possible by grants from:

