



Learning to Ride on Observatory Mesa

by Sabrina Carlson

On August 18, 2017, 18 students from Flagstaff Junior Academy gathered for a 6.5-mile ride after school on Observatory Mesa.

Before heading out to ride everyone was given reminders about trail courtesy, safety and teamwork.

The group worked extremely well together to make sure everyone had the water, snacks and equipment they needed. We also took time to inspect the bikes and look for any problems before we hit the trail.

Once everyone's bikes were tuned and water packs filled, the group did a few rounds of a "slow race" to practice their balance and ratchet pedaling skills. Once we had our fill of parking lot shenanigans we headed out for a short ride to the Flagstaff Urban Trail on the mesa. The more experienced riders had no trouble making it up the steep hill, and the newer riders received coaching on how to get themselves up the incline. Once we turned off the Urban Trail onto singletrack, everyone had ear-to-ear grins for the rest of the ride.



Along the way we had lots of time to pause at log rides, rocky descents and other obstacles to play and workshop the options for various skill levels. I was incredibly impressed with the skills many of the riders had already developed, but even more impressed with how courageous the newer riders were with trying things. Everyone jumped in, ready to learn with a positive attitude.

On our meander back toward school we stopped at the neighborhood pump track that the riders were calling "the dips" for a few minutes to play on the

little jumps.

It was a lovely ride on a lovely day to end a lovely week.



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