



Families in the Field: exploring northeastern Illinois

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Northeastern Illinois topography is dominated by evidence of the Pleistocene: glacial moraines, kettle lakes, bogs, and of course, Lake Michigan – the fifth largest freshwater lake in the world. My high school students have grown up within this landscape and their familiarity provides a springboard for us to dive deeper into their understanding of continental glaciers and Ice Ages. However, these features have merely functioned as a background to their lives. My goal is to inspire, by having them stand in the field and imagine how it all would have appeared 11,000 years ago.

For the past five years, the Geology teachers at Warren Township High School have been leading voluntary weekend hikes with our students and their families. The Geology teachers guide the hike with a more technical explanation of the landscape, and our students rise to the occasion as they share what they know with their parents, siblings, and peers. This opens lines of communication, increases student motivation, enhances the course material, and allows us to see on our landscape within the context of dynamic Earth systems.