

Dear Parents,

It officially feels like fall and we are enjoying autumn activities inside and outside. Today we took advantage of the beautiful weather and went for a nature hike. We each brought a bag to collect treasures along the way. We also brought some Indian corn that Ms. Teresa donated to our class from her parents' farm. We've been enjoying using it in our sensory table but decided to bring some with on our hike to feed squirrels. The first squirrel we spotted was appreciative of the corn but not as enthusiastic about being chased by several children tossing corn at him. Once we left I'm sure he came out of hiding with all of his pals to enjoy the bounty left behind.

We explored Central Park and discussed the changes since we were last there together in the spring. The flowers are gone and the trees are missing a lot of their leaves. The children ran around collecting pine cones from the "Christmas" trees and playing hide and seek using shrubs for cover. Our hike eventually took us to the playground across from the park where we joined other Plato classes. The students enthusiastically showed off their treasures and used them in their explorations. Two students created a volcano out of sand and gravel and used autumn leaves to represent the lava. Three other students used their hands and sticks they'd found to create designs with mud.

I consider our time outside each day to be essential. Research has shown that kids who spend time outside every day are healthier, happier, more creative, more alert and less stressed than those who don't. Being outside also helps us learn how to care for the environment.

Our pumpkin exploration has continued with another fun cooking project. We made pumpkin "dump" cake in a crock pot. I quickly changed the name to just pumpkin cake because the children kept calling it "dumb" cake and wondering what made it dumb and why were we calling it dumb, etc. Once our cake was done and tasted, we did our voting and made a graph. The majority of us liked or loved it and a few students not only wanted second helpings, but were asking for thirds!

This week we estimated the weight, diameter, and number of ribs (the indented ridges) of our pumpkins and then weighed, measured, and counted to find the correct number. We then compared our predictions to the actual number and saw how they corresponded. Also to go along with our continued exploration of coins, we did an experiment with partners estimating how many drops of water fit on a penny, nickel, dime, and quarter. Once we made our guesses, we did the experiment and wrote down our findings. When we compared answers, it became clear that there were some very big differences in outcomes. After discussing it, the students figured out that the differences were due to different types of droppers and also that some people kept counting drops even when they were spilling over the edge of the coin.

After reading a few variations of “Five Little Pumpkins”, we decided to write our own versions. The students are still working on writing and illustrating them. When they are complete, we will put them all together in a class book. Also, we made hand print ghosts that say a word or sound that includes the long /oo/ sound.

On Thursday, Oct. 19, our class participated in Jumpstart’s Read for the Record, a national campaign designed to break the world record for the largest shared reading experience ever. We read the book *Quackers* by Liz Wong while we were at the library, and as a result we were given a chance to win a copy of the book. We found out this week that our name was chosen in the raffle and we now have our very own class copy! *Quackers* is a funny and quirky story about a cat who thinks he’s a duck. He lives among the ducks, eats what they do, sleeps snuggled up to his duck friends, etc. He feels like he doesn’t completely fit in though and one day when he meets a duck that looks just like him, figures out that he is really a cat. He leaves the pond and his duck friends to live with other cats. Eventually he realizes that he misses his duck friends and finds a way to combine the best of both worlds. Our class had a wonderful discussion after reading the book. I asked the children what they thought the author’s message was and some of the answers were: we can be whatever we want to be, we don’t have to be just one thing, and we should be

happy just being who we are. I was so impressed with their understanding and comprehension. We can learn so much from the wisdom of our children.

A few notes: The weather is turning colder so please send your child with warm enough jackets, hats, mittens, etc. Feel free to send a spare sweatshirt, hat or mittens to keep in their cubbies.

Also, please partner with me in discouraging the children from bringing toys to school. We have been having issues of home items getting mixed up with school items, as well as valuable items getting misplaced or misused. I make it a point to have plenty of fun and exciting things for the students to explore in our classroom. Thanks for your help!

Have a wonderful weekend!

Ms. Leslie