

Dear Parents,

The big excitement this week was our long awaited field trip to the Shedd Aquarium. We have been exploring sea creatures for several weeks and the students brainstormed a list of all the animals they wanted to see. The list was very long so we voted to narrow it down to some favorites in case we couldn't fit everything in. We learned that the Shedd is home to over 32,000 animals and as one student told me today, "At least we got to see twelve!" We didn't see everything on our original list but we did see more than twelve.

We got to the aquarium just in time for the dive presentation at the Pritzker Caribbean Reef. There was a person in the tank feeding the various fish and also someone outside the tank with a microphone describing what was going on and pointing out fish, etc. The children were so excited to get up close looks at a giant sea turtle, many stingrays, a suckerfish, and various "Nemo" and "Dory" fish (clownfish and blue tang). We headed over to the Great Lakes exhibit and visited the Sturgeon Touch Pool where we were allowed to touch these giant fish as they swam by. They are bottom-dwelling lake fish and a species that has survived more than 200 million years, outliving the dinosaurs! The students had to lean in so far to touch the fish, not only did they get their sleeves wet, but I was concerned someone would fall in!

Right before lunch we made our way to the Wild Reef exhibit for a shark chat. The shark expert helped us identify different species of sharks as well as ask and answer questions. After lunch we headed over to the Polar Play Zone and underwater viewing area. The students really enjoyed this section of the aquarium because not only were there excellent opportunities for close up looks at penguins, beluga whales and dolphins, but also a mini submarine to explore, as well as a chance to dress up like a penguin and run around, climb and slide down "rocks" in a penguin habitat. We would've stayed there much longer but had to go up for the aquatic show at the Abbott Oceanarium. The show was spectacular and included dolphins showing off their amazing moves, penguins waddling past on the walkway, and a sea lion demonstrating how it is different from a seal (sea lions have visible ears). We were able to see the animals work with their trainers and hear about our responsibility to care for animal life on our planet.

We ended our Shedd Aquarium visit with a return to the Polar Play Zone so we could check out the sea otters and visit the Sea Star Touch, where we were able to touch a variety of sea stars. We had mistakenly called them starfish but it was explained to us that the name has been replaced by sea star because they are not fish but more closely related to sea urchins and sand dollars.

Today we spend much of the day preparing rice krispie treats to sell at the bake sale tomorrow. We split into three groups and each group worked together deciding who did each job and figuring out the recipe. After our treats had cooled down, we decided as a class how much to charge for them and the students made the price tags to put on the wrapped treats. We also discussed what the money was going to be used for and that led to many students sharing that they had a relative or knew of a friend of their parents who had battled cancer. I was impressed that they understood the importance of what we were doing and how the money could help. One student mentioned that we should charge even more money because it was going to such an important cause. We all agreed and raised our price.

To go along with preparing for the bake sale, we have been exploring coins and We have been learning the names for each coin and established what each coin is worth and then came up with many different ways to make specific values, such as 25 cents using pennies, nickels and dimes. We dug for coins in a tub full of unpopped corn, and then separated them into groups of pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters. We counted how many of each we found and tried to figure out how much money it was. Totaling the pennies and dimes were fairly easy but nickels and quarters were more challenging. We will continue working with coins so that we can have a better understanding of the value of money, more practice counting by ones, fives, and tens, and an introduction to fractions and decimals. Getting to spend money at the bake sale tomorrow will give the students a chance to apply what we are learning in a real life situation.

If you decide to send money to school with your child tomorrow, if possible please send quarters or other coins and working with coins will be great practice for the kids. All items being sold will be increments of twenty-five cents, with prices ranging from .50 - \$2.00.

Also, if you donated \$5 per child or \$10 per family, your child can wear any pink or Plato shirt tomorrow with jeans. Thanks for supporting such an important cause!

Have a great weekend and Columbus Day.

Ms. Leslie