

Dear Parents,

We have had an eventful and exciting week that has included a lot of STEM exploration with our “project/reading” buddies and within our own classroom. We met with Ms. Dionysia’s class last week for toothpick geometry. The goal was to develop geometric visualization skills and our students exceeded their buddies’ expectations! The older students built toothpick configurations and asked our students if they could create a new specific shape by removing one or two toothpicks. It was so much fun and all of the younger students were able to solve the puzzles with time and guidance from their buddies.

With Ms. Lorie Anne’s class we did a paper chain challenge where the students worked in groups of three and each group was given two pieces of construction paper, a pair of scissors and twelve inches of masking tape. The instructions were to make the longest paper chain they could with their materials. Some groups designed their chains first and drew what they predicted it would look like, while other groups started cutting paper right away. The results were impressive, with chains ranging in length from 24 inches to 138 inches.

Cooking projects are always a favorite activity in our room and building on a STEM activity I learned about in a teacher inservice, I decided to have the students work in small groups to make pancakes. They started by sitting with their groups and writing in their journals together to list what they’d need to make pancakes. Some of the answers included: cake batter, baking powder, vanilla, and milk. One of the groups drew and labeled the utensils they would need. Once they had completed their journal entries, I sent them to wash their hands and gave each group a bowl, a spoon, and measuring cups for liquid and dry ingredients. They worked together to measure 1 cup of mix and $\frac{2}{3}$ cup of water. They decided who would do which job and once the batter was made, they had to watch the clock to wait 2 minutes so the batter could “sit”. Each group came up to the electric griddle with their bowl and the children poured out $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of batter and made their own pancakes, including flipping them! I was impressed by their ability to work so well together and to be so responsible and safe around a hot griddle. We have decided that we want to include cooking projects as much as possible! Not only are we working on math and science concepts, but cooking also encourages an adventurous palate, promotes exploring with our senses, and boosts confidence.

The students were definitely proud of themselves and each of them ate the pancake he/she had made.

We started Tumblebooks this week at the library and other than a few technical difficulties, it went smoothly and the children are eager to go back again. Tumblebooks provides a wonderful selection of picture books for them to choose from and it allows the children to hear the story being read, read along with the text and watch the colorful animated illustrations. I believe it helps the students get more excited about books and reading. Many times they are choosing to listen to the same books we are reading aloud in class. When the students read or listen to the same book again and again, it builds their comprehension and vocabulary, as well as makes them aware of the patterns and rhythm of text.

Speaking of being excited about books, we were able to purchase ten Mo Willems Gerald and Piggy books for our classroom with the points we received from the Scholastic order. We are reading them as a group and the children are reading them to each other, taking turns as to who will be Gerald and who will be Piggy. Along with those books, we have been reading *Magic School Bus Great Shark Escape*, which is a chapter book. Each day I use one of the facts we have learned from the book about sharks or other sea creatures as our question of the day. This week we learned that there are over 350 species of sharks and that they have up to 3000 teeth at one time!

More exciting news: We have scheduled our first walking field trip of the year and will be going to City Hall to learn about our local water supply. We are hoping to find out where the water comes from when we turn on the sink to wash our hands or take a drink from the water fountain. The field trip is next Thursday, September 21. We will be leaving Plato right after lunch at 12:00 and will return by @ 1:30. I am hoping for two or three volunteers to go with us. If you are available and want to join us, please send me an email.

Thanks for sharing your amazing children with me. Have a great weekend!

Ms. Leslie