

Dear Parents,

What a wonderful job the children did at the Holiday Program! They sounded great and I'm so proud of them for all of their hard work practicing, preparing, and memorizing their lines and songs. Thank you all for working with them at home and helping them become such confident performers. All of the time and energy paid off and they were amazing!

Although a lot of our time recently has been dedicated to practicing for the Holiday Program, we have managed to fit in other things as well. We made crockpot hot chocolate last Friday and incorporated some math and science concepts. The children who chose to participate in making it had to figure out how much milk was in each individual milk carton from the lunchroom and then figure out how to end up with eight cups. They also measured cocoa powder and vanilla to add to the milk. I bought small wire whisks so the children could mix the ingredients and they enjoyed using tools that were scaled down for smaller hands. I let the children smell and sample each ingredient and they discovered that although cocoa powder smells delicious, it doesn't good on its own. When it was time to taste our hot chocolate, we realized that it would be too hot to drink so we decided to put the crock outside in the cold air to help it cool down. After 30 minutes outside of Plato, we found that it was almost too cool! We also had marshmallows to add and I had the children estimate how many marshmallows in the bag and then we counted to find out the actual amount.

This week we have turned our sensory table into a wrapping center. I placed wrapping paper, scissors, tape and various sized boxes in the table and the students have been wrapping presents for each other and even taking some home for Santa Claus. The gifts are most likely empty kleenex boxes but they have been wrapped with care and presented with thoughtfulness. As with any gift, it is the thought that counts.

Speaking of Santa, we were fortunate enough to get to go on a field trip to Prairie Lakes to see a children's' production of a play called *The Christmas Toy Shop*. It was funny, engaging and helped to remind me of the magic and wonder children bring to this season. During the play, some of the toys that had come to life were about to be discovered by the "bad" toymaker. As he approached, one of my students, totally caught up in the moment, yelled, "Hide!!" It was real to her and she was instinctively calling out to help the characters.

The magic continued when we returned to school and I heard a few of the students discussing whether the Santa in the play was the real Santa or not. It was a friendly discussion, sharing opinions respectfully. Just another example of the close knit community Plato fosters and we have established within our classroom.

We are finishing up our novel study just in time for the winter break. We have been reading *Mr. Popper's Penguins* and although I didn't think we could read all twenty chapters before school let out, we have been averaging two chapters a day. The children are very engaged in the story and have written predictions in their journals as well as creating illustrations of images they visualized while listening to a chapter.

Some other books we've been reading this week: *Fright Before Christmas* by James Howe and featuring characters from one of our earlier novels, *Bunnicula*, *What Dogs Want for Christmas*, *Littlest Evergreen*, and *Let's Go Rock Collecting*.

Some notes: Monday, Dec. 18 we will be going to the library for Tumblebooks. Please make sure your child has earbuds/earphones at school.

Our Scholastic book order is on its way. Because of the delay of last month's order, Scholastic sent me coupons for each child to pick out a book for \$5 or less. I let the children look at the order forms last Friday and they were super excited to pick out a book. Each day someone asks me when the "five dollar" books are arriving! Scholastic guaranteed it would arrive by Dec. 19 so I'm keeping my fingers crossed!

Another gentle reminder to send your child to school with appropriate clothing to go outside in the cold. If the wind chill is between 10-25 degrees we go outside for an abbreviated recess. If it is above 25, we go out for the regular scheduled time. I myself keep a spare pair of mittens and a sweater at school just in case. Feel free to send in extras with your child to keep at school.

This year we have actual wooden cubbies where they can store these items. :)

Due to our limited Fridays this month, next week we will go to the bank Thursday, Dec. 21 to make deposits.

Finally, due to food allergies, I would like to discourage the students from bringing in food for Show and Tell. We have to be super diligent to make sure that whatever is brought in is safe for all of the students. Unfortunately, I have had to send home items that are questionable and the children are understandably disappointed. If we move away from food as Show and Tell, it will be easier to keep our environment safe for everyone.

Thanks for sharing your amazing children with me - they were truly stars on stage today! Have a great weekend!

Ms. Leslie