

Dear Parents,

Happy New Year! It has been fun seeing everyone and catching up on what we did over break, where we went, and what presents we received. Our first question of the day this week was, “What year is it” and after one or two students answered “January,” they worked together to use a calendar in our room and come up with 2018. We also discussed what New Year’s Resolutions are and I had them write in their journals about something they’d like to learn this year or something they’d like to do. Answers ranged from learning to ice skate, learning to ski, learning the piano, and going on a vacation.

This week we read a book called *Martin Luther King, Jr. Day* that told the story of a first grade teacher taking her students to a museum and learning about the day that celebrates his life and his dream for our nation. The teacher in the book asks her students what their dreams are for the future and their responses from the book prompted a discussion in class about our dreams. Tomorrow we will be writing about and illustrating our dreams and I will hang them up outside our room when they are completed.

Continuing with our exploration of rocks, I brought in a piece of pumice for the students to examine. They were surprised to learn that not only is it volcanic rock commonly used to make concrete but also that it can be purchased in the beauty section of a store and that it is used to scrub skin. Of course everyone took a turn rubbing it on their arms, hands, etc.

This week we watched videos of volcanoes erupting and then we made our own volcanoes out of clay and pill bottles. The bottles anchored the clay and also acted as a container to place the ingredients to make our volcanoes erupt. The students measured out baking soda with measuring spoons, which helped introduce the concept of fractions and the relationship between $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$ and 1. We used an example of sharing a cupcake with our siblings and discussed how would it feel if each person was supposed to get $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{1}{4}$ and ended up with an unequal share. We added the other ingredients: dish soap, drops of food coloring, and finally vinegar. Some volcanoes erupted right away, some needed to have the ingredients stirred, and for one we needed to start again with all new ingredients.

This week we also began a fun phonics game where I gave the students a set of the alphabet cut out, with vowels in one color paper and consonants in another. I told

them that we would be making three letter words using the short a sound and then gave them clues such as, “Baseball players wear this on their heads.” Once they made the word “cap”, I would say, “Change one letter and make a word that describes the kind of music teenagers like. They would make the word “rap” and then we moved on to the next word. Once we did several, I had them come up with and create words using the short a sound. I did this with a few students at a time and it was so popular that students were hanging around the table asking when they could have a turn or asking each day if they could do it again. I love their enthusiasm for learning!

A few notes: Tomorrow we will be going to the bank to make deposits. Due to our day off this coming Monday, Jan. 15, we will be going to the library on Jan. 22 for Tumblebooks.

I gave the students new Scholastic book order forms today. Orders are due next Friday, Jan. 19. Scholastic unfortunately didn't get the students' free books to them in time to give them out before the winter break, but they were waiting for us when we arrived back to school Monday. I called Scholastic to let them know how disappointed my students were to not have their books arrive when they were promised (yet again!). To make up for the second occurrence of delayed delivery, Scholastic sent me coupons for the students to each choose another free book with a value of \$5 or less. Most of the students chose one today from the order forms and I have a list of those books in case you want to place an order and don't want to duplicate. New books are always a welcome gift and it has been gratifying to see how excited the children are to choose their own special book.

Finally, the crazy weather with cold, snow, slush, and now rain, has created challenging conditions at the park for recess. Thank you for sending in boots, snow pants, hats, gloves, etc. and thank you for allowing me to send your child home from Plato wet, soggy, muddy, covered in chalk, and hopefully happy. This week the students have played soccer in the mud, found a puddle that literally was deeper than most of their boots, and today played “chalk monster” in 58 degree drizzle. It has all been in the name of outdoor exploration and play and they are having a blast!

Have a wonderful weekend and day off on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. As always, thank you for sharing your amazing children with me.
Ms. Leslie