

Dear Parents,

Although it's been a short week, we've managed to accomplish quite a lot. After reading about Martin Luther King, Jr., the children completed their "I have a dream" writing and illustrations and they are now posted outside of our room. Some of their dreams include: peace, that no one gets hurt, helping people face their fears, that no one gets shot, and to take care of the earth. I was truly touched by their thoughtful visions and have faith that they will have a powerful and positive impact on our world.

We followed that up with talking about kindness and they wrote in their journals about ways they can be kind. I loved the diversity of examples they came up with: opening doors for people, cleaning the house (and the world!), giving everyone presents, making breakfast, lunch, and dinner for their parents, sharing their toys and being a best friend to someone who doesn't have one. Let me know if they follow through with cleaning the house or making you breakfast, lunch, or dinner so I can tell my own kids and hopefully motivate them! :)

This week we started our new novel study, *Tale of Despereaux* by Kate Dicamillo. A few of the students know about it because their younger siblings read it with Mr. Chris and they are excited about seeing the movie after we finish. So far they have commented on how short these chapters are compared to *Mr. Popper's Penguins* and how funny it is that a mouse is in love with a princess. We also read a picture book this week called *Madeline Finn and the Library Dog* about a girl who is not a confident reader yet and struggles when she has to read aloud in class. Not only doesn't she get a star sticker from her teacher (she gets a "keep trying" sticker), she also gets laughed at by classmates. Her local librarian introduces her to a dog she can read to each week at the library. The dog just listens, and gives her unconditional love and support. Eventually Madeline gains the confidence to try again to read aloud in class. She gets through it and earns the coveted star sticker. After reading this book we discussed it and the children mentioned how mean it was for a classmate to laugh at Madeline and how they wish we could have dogs at Plato to read to. I told them that instead of real dogs, we could bring in a favorite stuffed animal to read to. We'll plan a day to do that and I'll let you know when. Reading the book also made me grateful that Plato is not a school where we force the children to read aloud, causing anxiety or embarrassment, or where we give out star stickers for achievement or "keep on trying" stickers such as what Madeline's teacher gives her. All of your children are growing and learning at their own pace and as I urge them along and challenge them to stretch their capabilities, my goal is to do it in a respectful and nurturing way.

In Science and Math this week we began a crystal growing experiment with rocks. We practiced our measuring skills and added hot water to crystal growing powder. We are observing them and writing down daily in our log what changes occur. On Wednesday when it was too cold to go outside for recess, we made homemade play dough using an electric skillet. The children who wanted to help measured out the flour, salt, water, and cream of tartar. They also added food coloring and took turns kneading the dough to try and mix in the colors.

We met with Ms. Dionysia's class this week for Reading/STEM buddies. The children are so excited to read with their buddies and pick out library books specifically to share with them. After reading together the buddies worked to create snowball launchers out of cups and balloons. After determining that it was nearly impossible to make a hole safely in a plastic cup, they tried paper cups with much better results. Ms. Dionysia brought in real snow from outside and the buddies launched snowballs down the hall! Everyone had a blast and some of my students brought their launchers out to recess to share with other classes.

Other important stuff: Scholastic book orders are due tomorrow. Each of the students picked out another free book and hopefully the order will arrive before Spring Break. (just kidding!)

We will be going to the library Monday, Jan. 22 for Tumblebooks so please make sure that the students have their earphones or earbuds.

The Meemic Foundation presented us with my grant award this week and now we are excitedly picking out all the items we will need for our listening center. I am having the children consult on favorite books we should order.

The weather has been unpredictable as always. Last week we were outside in warmish drizzle and this week we had one normal recess, one abbreviated recess and one indoor recess due to the cold. Please make sure your children have snow pants, boots, etc. so that they are prepared to go outside and have fun while staying warm and dry.

Finally, we are reading several versions of *Stone Soup* to go along with our rock exploration and will be cooking our own version of stone soup next week. Tomorrow the children will write out a recipe including what they think we should put in our soup. I will send out a list of ingredients and am asking that each family sign up to send in something to add. Once you choose an item, please reply to all so that everything gets covered without duplicates. Thanks for your help!

Have a wonderful weekend and thanks for sharing your amazing children with me!

Ms. Leslie