

Dear Parents,

February is here and we have had an exciting week and start to the month! Our long awaited listening center is up and running! The equipment arrived earlier this week as well as sets of books and CDs. I set it up right away and it has become the most popular activity in our room. There are four headsets available along with four copies of each book. The students have been taking turns, negotiating which book to read, and even trying to share headphones with each other if all four are being used. We discussed how to use the CD player as well as take care of the CDs and the books by placing everything back where it belongs. I can see the positive effect our new listening center is having by the amount of enthusiasm and excitement it has generated. Students who usually come in each morning and build with legos are heading straight for the listening center this week. All morning it is being used as well as during snack/reading time. We are incorporating music as well; one of the CDs features songs and it has been fun to hear the children belting out "Farmer in the Dell" at the top of their lungs while reading along with the words.

When we had our weekly visit to the library for book check-out, the children looked for books with CDs to bring back to school to listen to with the CD player and headphones. We found Dr. Seuss books with CDs as well as other picture books. One student came over to me with an audiobook that came with six CDs and had a running time of over five hours! I gently explained to her that since it was really long and didn't have a book to follow along with, she should probably pick a shorter book to check out. She decided to go with *Scaredy Squirrel* instead.

This week we also began our service project. We decided to once again collect items for the Orphans of the Storm animal shelter. The students created posters, decorated collection boxes, and planned our classroom presentations. As a group we decided what we should say and the students volunteered to either speak or carry a poster, a bin. We went to each classroom and explained what our service project was all about. The students did a great job and with each room we visited, their confidence grew and even some of the students who didn't originally want to speak ended up answering questions or contributing additional information.

It has only been one day so far and we have already collected many newspapers, some towels and blankets, a few dog treats and cans of food. One of the students remembered that last year we collected over 75 lbs of newspaper and this year we hope to collect even more. I will enclose a copy of our wishlist in case you'd like to donate any items. If you decide to shop for any of the items, please include your child if possible in the shopping/selecting experience. Not only is it a great way to help them feel empowered and invested in our service project, you're also giving them a chance to practice their math/money skills. For example: you could give them a budget of \$5.00 and take them to the store with the wish list and have them figure out what they can buy with that amount.

Continuing with our rock exploration, we began rock journals and each picked a rock to examine, draw, trace, and describe texture, color, etc. The students brainstormed where rocks come from and how they can be used. One student pointed to the bricks in our room and another pointed out that sidewalks and roads are made from rocks. Today they wrote their predictions on whether or not their rocks would sink or float in water. Tomorrow we will conduct the sink or float experiment and document our results. Of course, any chance to explore (play/splash) in water is a good time!

Some notes: I sent home Scholastic book orders today. They are due next Friday, February 9. Scholastic sent me enough extra coupons last month so I was able to let each student pick out another free book worth \$5 or less. It was fun watching them pour over the book order forms circling the ones they wanted with marker, showing each other their picks, telling me which ones they wanted and then five minutes later seeing them change their minds and pick a different book. They picked books we have read together in class, books someone brought in for show and tell, books that caught their eye based on the cover or the main character, and even a book that comes with a necklace. :)

Have a great weekend and as always, thanks for sharing your amazing children with me.

Ms. Leslie