

Dear Parents,

It has been a short week but a full week! We began our Math Olympic games with the matific website and all of the children are enthusiastic and excited about it. I have allowed them to work on this in pairs during exploration and math games. The competition continues until Wednesday, Feb. 28., and I will try to give them some time each day to continue the games. If you would like your child to play these games at home please know that the games are educational and reinforce math skills. If you need me to send your child's username and password, please let me know. I just found out that Plato is #24 in the contest out of 300 schools in the nation. Let's keep the momentum going! :)

This week we continued our fossil exploration with Ms. Dionysia's class. We paired off and had them create a fossil using clay and items we collected from our classroom. After they completed their fossils, we had each group travel table to table trying to identify what the fossils were made from. They were very creative, using paper clips, toothpicks, prisms, pattern blocks, etc. to create animal tracks, butterflies, insects, and a lot more. The students enjoyed the activity with their buddies so much that we extended it the past few days in our classroom. I have put out clay and they have gone around the room collecting objects to create fossils with.

We have continued our tooth activities and this week we examined our two teeth that have been in water and Sprite and made predictions about what will happen to three more teeth that we've put into containers of Coke, orange juice, and chocolate milk. This week we had the opportunity to continue our discussion on dental hygiene when I told the students that I had to leave right after school to go to a dentist appointment and would brush my teeth before leaving Plato. They thought that was too funny and one student's reaction to my dentist appointment was, "But you're so old!" That prompted a discussion on how even "old" people need to take good care of their teeth and see the dentist regularly.

We have finished our novel study of *Tale of Despereaux* and as we got further into the book, it was amazing how engaged the students became. When we first started reading it, there were several students who complained when I took the book out and voted against reading another chapter if I took a vote. At some point, it changed to everyone voting to read another chapter and vocally complaining when I stopped reading and told them we were out of time. This week, it was an exciting countdown to the end, with students reminding me each day that we needed to read or asking me when we were going to read.

This is a great example of the importance of reading aloud. Studies have shown that it is the single most important activity for reading success. It develops the listener's interest in books and desire to be a reader. Reading aloud demonstrates the relationship between the printed word and meaning and invites the listener into a conversation with the author. Because children can listen on a higher language level than they can read, reading aloud exposes children to vocabulary and language structure that is not part of everyday speech. It also makes complex ideas more accessible. New readers are exposed to rich and engaging books and it encourages them to become better readers.

We will be watching the movie version of *Tale of Despereaux* tomorrow and will compare the movie to the book, discuss the similarities and differences and create a Venn diagram together.

Finally, we were planning on ending our donation drive for Orphans of the Storm this week, but due to a schedule change with the volunteer coming to visit us, we will be extending our drive one more week. This means we will continue to collect items up until next Friday, March 2. Thank you all so much for all the donations! Please feel free to send in more newspapers and other items. We have now filled four boxes and they are an impressive sight outside of our classroom. We would love to fill the entire hallway with donations!

As always, thank you for sharing your amazing children with me. Have a great weekend!

Ms. Leslie

