

CULTURAL NEWSLETTER
NOVEMBER 2017

Dear Parents,

We actually got ahead of ourselves in October. We had time to learn all about cniderias, those soft bodied animals with stinging tentacles. This phylum (family) is slightly more complex phyla and one that many people would agree is much more beautiful than the Porifera: Cnidaria. Haven't heard of this animal? This family of animals has stinging tentacles and the most popular one is the jelly(fish.) In class we refer to this animal as a "Jelly" for two good reasons. Should you ever feel its body (which we truly hope you do not because they can deliver quite a sting with those tentacles), you would discover that its body feels very much like a bag of jelly. (I hope your child explained why he or she was sent home with a baggie full of jelly while we were studying this beautiful family.) Another reason for eliminating the "fish" from jellyfish is that it is not a fish! We will discuss this more in class so your child will be able to explain everything to you.

We recently began our study of another invertebrate that is found on the ocean floor: The Echinoderm. This group of animals is characterized by its spiny skin and a body that is (almost always) divided into 5 parts. The spines may be long as with the sea urchin or short and bumpy as on the sea star. The space between the arms may be filled, as with the sand dollar and sea urchin or these arms may be separate as with the sea star. Another feature that sets this family apart from others we've studied so far is that they have a mouth on one side of the body (the part moving along the ocean floor) and an anus to excrete the waste on the top of the body. Separating the parts of the body that take in food and excrete waste is quite ingenious, wouldn't you agree???

Your child will bring home a memorable sea urchin model very soon! Be sure to identify the mouth and the anus!

We will continue our zoology with yet another invertebrate phylum: MOLLUSKS. Instead of having spiny skin, this phylum has a soft body. If there is a gardener in your family, you are already familiar with one of the most common

mollusks: the garden snail. Most relatives of this soft-bodied animal such as the clam have a hard shell on the outside of its body for protection. The children will quickly learn how well these animals protect themselves and how people cannot accomplish what a sea star can - and does - do everyday of it's life!

This phylum/family includes other soft-bodied animals such as the squid, slug and octopus. The children will be creating their own sea slug books using our beautiful classroom models. You may notice that the slugs in your child's book might have unusual names. That's because they made up the names themselves! We often talk about how zoologists name the animals they discover, so I thought I'd give them the opportunity to exercise their own skills as zoologists.

I hope you and your family will enjoy the Thanksgiving holiday together. Perhaps you can include a mollusk or two on the menu!

Sincerely,

Toni

"Our method encourages children to be both devout and free in their intellectual operations. Growing up in the fashion, they are neither timid nor fearful; but pleasantly self-possessed, courageous and alert."

~ Maria Montessori