

CULTURAL NEWSLETTER
NOVEMBER 2018

Dear Parents,

Our invertebrate studies are continuing with a beautiful - and more complex phylum, **Echinoderms**. If you've ever visited the "touch pool" at the Monterey Bay Aquarium, you're already familiar with the most obvious characteristic of the phylum/family. **Echinoderms have an external skeleton with spines** which may be long, as on the sea urchin, or short and bumpy as on the sea star. Echinoderms usually have five arms. 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. **The children will be creating their own echinoderm models (sea urchins)**, showing its basic characteristics: Radial symmetry; a body divided into five parts; and spiny skin. Another feature that sets this family apart from others we've studied is that the mouth is on the bottom side of the body (the part moving along the ocean floor) and an anus to excrete the waste is 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! The sea urchin models are really quite beautiful, and I think you'll want to set up a display in your home!

We will continue our zoology studies 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 an Echinoderm sea star can - and does - do every day of its life!

This phylum/family, mollusks, 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 this fashion, they are neither timid nor fearful; but pleasantly self-possessed, courageous and alert."

~ Maria Montessori