



MS Science

April 18, 2008

Dear Middle School Families,

It was nice to see everyone return after Spring Break. Thank you for coming to the parent conferences and I hope you enjoyed the student-created experiment display as much as the meetings. The poster boards say more than I can about the students' science class. As we wrap up the biology section of the year, students are fully experiencing chemistry and how scientists such as Dmitri Mendeleev and Henry Mosely arranged the periodic table. Students from all grades were not taught how the scientists arranged the periodic table initially; rather, I asked them what observations they could make from the gigantic periodic table in the science room. I was surprised by how much students knew about chemical symbols and how they were arranged. Currently, the students are learning about chemical and physical properties and their differences. We have been experimenting with different materials such as different types of rocks, metals and salts to make sense of it all.

We read about physical properties and explored the word "**Density**" in fifth and sixth grade. Each team of students took on a material provided in class: aluminum foil, sand stone, sugar or others and described its properties as much as they could with equipment such as scales, rulers, graduated cylinders and heat plates. Some students carefully monitored the melting points of sugar and other substances. Others found out if substances could dissolve in water and alcohol etc. Then, each team reported what they found and we will work together to organize our own "periodic table". Soon, we will explore concepts of an atom and chemical formulas and we will continue to explore the different properties such as density and phase change in our experiments.

In seventh and eight grades, students discussed the difference between physical and chemical properties. We also talked about how the periodic table was organized; by groups and by periods, and how they each share similar properties. Teams of students tested the properties of ten substances such as heat conductivity, malleability, solubility in water, density and were asked to organize their findings in a way that was similar to the periodic table. They then shared their table with the class. They will also be working on a home project researching two elements of their choice and build a model of the atom or a molecule that contains the element. It will be a fun way to learn about chemical bonding.

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