

Learning Center Creature Features

West School Learning Center has gone wild with not only K-5 students, but also with Monarch butterflies, two turtles and an aquarium full of young fish from the Kishwaukee River.

During a walk along the countryside, Mrs. Totman, kindergarten teacher, was kind enough to gather several Monarch caterpillars and bring them into the Learning Center for all to view. The caterpillars devoured milkweed for several days and practically grew before our eyes. We missed the making of the chrysalis because it happened so quickly, but we were all amazed at the perfect formation of the tiny green shell holding the pupa. Some students and staff were fortunate to be present at the very moment one of the butterflies emerged from its chrysalis and now they all want butterfly habitats in their homes next year. Thank you, Mrs. Totman, for sharing this beautiful and amazing metamorphosis with the school.

Two other creatures that are now living in the Learning Center are Franklin and Shelby. Franklin, who comes to us from kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Williar, is a female Gulf Coast Box Turtle. She is approximately 30 years old and has a friendly and sweet personality. Her favorite foods are peaches and night crawlers.

Shelby, who is a gift from Yasmienne and Eva Myers, is a male Russian Tortoise. He is approximately 7 years old and loves to climb to the top of his log hut. He is still quite shy when all the new faces are staring at him but loves to come to the edge of the glass and watch the activity when no one knows he is looking. We would like to thank Dr. Carlos Dominguez for trimming Shelby's beak and giving him the thumbs up for good health. Thanks especially to Yasmienne and Eva for the good care they gave Shelby before giving him a new home at West School.

Finally, we would like to thank Connor Bolander and Thomas Joiner for the major overhauling of the aquarium. They also seined the Kishwaukee River and stocked the aquarium with a variety of "fry" (or young fish) native to Northern Illinois. Some of the fish you will find are blue gill, darters, minnows, suckers, a bullfrog tadpole, and even a crayfish. The crayfish has already molted once and shed its two little claws for much bigger ones.

Taking good care of our wild creatures would not be possible without the knowledge and support of **Pets and More** in Sycamore. They provided us with the habitat for Shelby and the new filter on the aquarium is awesome! Thanks for your help Pets and More! We couldn't care for these wonderful creatures without you!

The Learning Center is wild about the students and nurturing their love of learning. We encourage the use of magnifying glasses and will gladly provide a chair for anyone who wants to read to the animals.

. . .and we are finding out the computers are pretty wild, as well!

Students are learning the new procedures for logging on the computers. It is a change from last year because of the new system requirements and they are learning it very quickly. Classes have taken a look inside a computer and it's pretty wild what's in there! It is the first time many have ever seen a hard drive, the CPU, a video card, and more. The computer parts are now a center for students to study up close. To actually

hold the inside parts in their hands and to try to put it back together is a fun challenge and even more fun to watch. All of the students are looking forward to using the computer and the learning seems so easy for their young minds. They see it as fun and the staff sees it as getting them ready for their future in technology.