



# PANTHER PRESS

## Dinosaur Tracks

This month fourth grade students at Palmer were surprised to see dinosaur tracks throughout the halls! In Mr. Bedeaux's class, the students worked with a geologist from Lafayette College, Dr. Kira Lawrence, to determine if we could outrun dinosaurs. Our enrichment teacher, Dr. Finger, arranged the collaboration.

Dr. Lawrence presented some background knowledge on dinosaurs and how geologists learn about them from studying the "geological record," the evidence found in the soil and rocks around us. She presented information on quadrupeds and bipeds and how scientists use footprints that are left in the rocks around the world to learn about dinosaurs. She showed students casts of dinosaur femurs. Afterwards, Dr. Lawrence asked the students to make hypothesis about how fast they thought three different dinos ran and how fast the children could run.

She and her assistant, Ms. Bochner, had life-size vinyl tyrannosaurus rex, apatosaurus, and triceratops footprints laid in the halls. In small groups the students measured the stride of the dinoprints and then the children ran across the snow to leave their footprints to measure their stride lengths. Next they followed Dr. Lawrence's lead to compute the formula based on something called "dimensional speed" to determine the dinosaurs' and children's speeds. We then gathered all of the students' data and determined the ranges of children's speed predictions. We used this data to compare to the children's predictions. Finally we reached conclusions based on the observations and analysis.

Throughout the lesson the students were engaged. They were surprised to learn that they could outrun an apatosaurus, and that a triceratops was actually faster than a t-rex! This lesson incorporated all steps of the scientific method and Dr. Lawrence did a fantastic job illustrating how she uses the method throughout her fieldwork. Thanks to Dr. Lawrence for coming to Palmer.

