

FINDING FOSSILS



With sieves in hand and a bucket of water, students Haley Firebaugh, Hannah Ramos, Francisco Penalzo and Zachary Sullenger, rub the contents of the matrix through the metal grid to try and find large pieces of fossilized sharks. Smaller, sometimes microscopic, fossils are separated and searched with microscopes.

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Crockett art students dig in to SharkFinder

BY RUTH CAMPBELL
rcampbell@oaoa.com

As a way of integrating different curriculums, Crockett Middle School art teacher Priscilla Hernandez has brought the citizen science program SharkFinder to the campus.

SharkFinder has been expanded this year across Ector County ISD, but Hernandez said hers is one of the first middle school classes to experience it. On Monday, about 23 students sifted through a matrix for shark teeth.

As part of summer school, students participated in SharkFinder activities with University of Texas Permian Basin Associate Professor of Art Chris Stanley.

Hernandez said a lot of students think art is just drawing and painting. But she said you have to look around you to see where scientists get their illustrations from.

"... I wanted to integrate here at Crockett as a cross curricular activity, where I want them to know



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Bridgette "Sharky" Casas, who is the head instructor for the Sharkfinder program, distributes what are known as "matrixes" to students. These matrixes consist of sediment gathered that may contain fossilized shark remnants such as teeth and vertebrae.

that ... art is not only just painting, there's illustrators. I have a friend whose son is a medical illustrator,

so I want science to be in it and writing ...," Hernandez said.

She added that she wants her

students to sketch their findings. Hernandez said the activity is aimed at opening students' eyes to more possibilities with art and science.

Stanley was expected at Crockett Tuesday to look at their kilns and see if they can be used to make ceramic shark's teeth soon. If not, Hernandez said, the Pots-n-Prints, a mobile studio that takes printmaking and ceramics to students around the Permian Basin, could be used to fire the artwork.

Bianca Molina and Hannah Vasquez, both 13-year-old eighth-graders at Crockett, said they were looking forward to digging into the matrix.

"I thought it was cool because after watching movies you can kind of ... (see) how they do it. Doing it yourself it's like, 'Oh wow!' It's really interesting the way the lines, the colors, the shapes ... all have the interaction together. It's really interesting, too," Vasquez said.

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Vasquez said she thinks it will inspire her in future art projects.

Jett “Sharky” Casas, liaison specialist for PICK Education, said bringing SharkFinder to the middle schools is probably just as important as it is in elementary schools.

“... You cannot teach science without hands-on (lessons). You have to have hands-on in order for these students to retain the information that is being taught. They have to actually feel it, touch it, hear it. Other than that, I don’t feel like they’re learning. In today’s world, in the 21st century, our students are tactile. They need to touch, they need to feel it. I think it’s just very important. Casas said.

She’s hoping this will inspire science and math teachers to want to try SharkFinder. She already has three at Nimitz Middle School.

Casas added that Shark-



>> SharkFinder:
[tinyurl.com/
yxe9g58h](http://tinyurl.com/yxe9g58h)

Finder is very engaging for students. Once the students got going, the room got quiet.

“I think that the kids really, really need this,” she said. “... They’re engaged now. They’re wanting to get in there and find these fossils. It’s neat.”

Hernandez said she is a long-term substitute teacher at Crockett and is working toward her certification. She had Stanley as an art instructor at UTPB.

“... Art’s my passion. I’ve always worked with it. My children went to Reagan (Magnet Elementary) and I always volunteered and painted stuff for them ...,” Hernandez said.

The job at Crockett, she said, is perfect “because it’s something that I really enjoy doing.”