

ALL ABOARD



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Kindergarten teacher Corinne Tomaino reads to students during Polar Express Day at Jackson-Milton Elementary School. Students in kindergarten through second grade had story time Friday in the inflatable bubble while other grades participated in different Polar Express-related activities.

J-M students ride the Polar Express

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JACKSON-MILTON elementary students donned their flannel pajamas Friday for lessons centered around a favorite holiday picture book.

"The Polar Express," written and illustrated by Chris Van Allsburg, tells the story of a boy who travels to the North Pole on Christmas Eve and returns with a keepsake silver bell whose jingle can be heard only by true believers of Santa Claus.

Kindergarten teacher Corinne Tomaino had her students jingle the bells around their neck each time the bells were referenced in the story.

"How many of you can hear your bells?" she asked as Santa believers raised their hands.

Kindergarten teacher Kelly Williams read the story to her class next. They all gathered inside a large tentlike plastic bubble decorated for the



Jackson-Milton students Chase Darling and Ashlie Paschall listen during story time. Students wore jingle-bell necklaces they made and rang them at certain points throughout the reading.

winter season. Fluffy "snow" lined the walls where paper evergreens grew. A fireplace complete with stockings sat at the front next to a pile of wrapped gifts.

"A snowflake poked my head!" said Jasper Gettmann, 5.

The glittering snowflakes hanging from the low ceiling of the bubble proved themselves tempting distractions despite Williams' warning to "see

with our eyes and not our hands."

Students poked at them and blew so they swung gently overhead.

"I liked the snowflakes," said Nathan Horner, 6.

Williams had students file into rows of yellow chairs lining the bubble, and all marveled at the decorations before starting to read.

"I like the train," Montana Drodouski, 5, said of the bubble. She wore pink pajamas for the occasion.

"I got spots and a kitty," she said, pointing to her ensemble.

Williams wore fleece pajamas and big, furry bunny slippers.

Elsewhere in the building, second-grade teacher Joe Darnore dressed as the Polar Express conductor in a festive hat and vest and led his students down the hall for another activity.

Third-graders in Kelly Snowden's class made conductor hats of their

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of paper, on which they'd illustrated the story plot. Students in another third-grade class studied vocab-

ulary used in the book.

Later in the day, students would watch the movie version of the book and cite differences while sipping hot chocolate and munching on cookies.

Principal Jo DiLoreto said lessons are tailored to be age-appropriate for each grade, and the day is a hit each year. Williams agreed.

"They love it," she said. "They get really excited."