DESIGN YOUR OWN FOSSIL

GRADE LEVEL: K - 3

OBJECTIVE:

Students will be able to describe how fossils are formed.

MATERIALS:

Plaster of Paris
Plastic containers such as margarine tubs
(one container for each child)
Small shells of various types (two or three for each child)
Petroleum jelly
Water

PROCEDURE:

1. Mix up a batch of plaster of Paris that is rather stiff. Fill the containers half full of the plaster mix.

2. Distribute shells and containers with plaster of Paris and small amount of petroleum jelly to each student.

3.   Direct students to coat the shells with petroleum jelly and press them into the plaster of Paris. Set the containers aside for a day or two until the plaster has set.

4.   When the plaster has set have the students reclaim their containers and carefully remove the shells. The shells will have left depressions or molds of their shape in the plaster. Explain that fossils leave impressions in the sand and clay at the bottom of the sea where they once lived and this is what we are finding at the Falls in the fossil beds. We also are finding the shells of the animal or the hard bony parts of the animal. (Student may be directed to paint the mold of shells so that they show up better.)

5. Show students pictures or overheads of some of the fossils that they will find at the Falls (crinoid stems, brachiopods, trilobites, corals, clams, snails, etc.) or borrow the fossil "Museum to Go" kit from the park.

6. Distribute paper and crayons or chalk and direct the students to draw an undersea picture of the animals and plants as they may have looked when they were alive.

EXTENSIONS/EVALUATIONS:

7.   Make fossil rubbings at the fossil beds. Students need paper such as newsprint to spread over the protruding fossil and a crayon or piece of chalk to rub across the paper to get an imprint of the fossil on the paper. Find the name of their fossil and print it under the rubbing.   The finished products can be displayed in the classroom.

1) *Fossil trilobite* Phacops
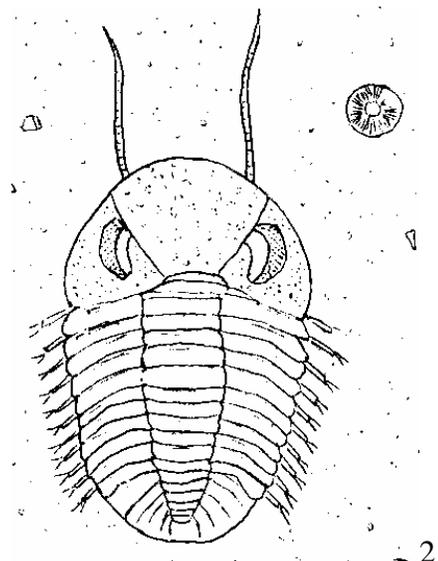
2) Phacops *trilobite reconstructed as living*

8