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Sky View Middle School sixth graders experience applied learning at P.J. Keating Company in Lunenburg

LUNENBURG_ For the fourth straight year, sixth graders at Sky View Middle School in Leominster have gotten to see their science lessons played out in real life. The middle schoolers recently visited P.J. Keating Company's (PJK) plant and quarry in Lunenburg as part of the school's endeavors to bring science to life.

"The P.J. Keating quarry tour is a true definition of a field trip: an experience outside of the classroom that is not easily accessible to them and coincides with the curriculum. Visiting the quarry allows students to relate their world to the scientific world of rock study, and it's right in their backyard, a mile down the street from school," said teacher Sharon Salmonson.

Salmonson has been instrumental in coordinating the program each year with PJK Health and Safety Administrative Assistant Joanne Adams. This year is the biggest group to tour the plant yet...an impressive 320 students.

"We had 150 kids yesterday (in three separate groups) and 170 kids today (also in three separate groups)," Adams said.

PJK Health and Safety Manager Remi Fleutte and PJK Environmental Energy Recycling Manager Dan Brodeur presented a PowerPoint presentation to the students at the school the day before the tours took place.

"It was a visual tour to get the kids excited about what they were going to see. In the past they've always asked about a blast, and since obviously they cannot be present for one, one was filmed and put into the school presentation," Fleutte said. "We talked a lot about the types of stone they are learning about: igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic."

"The students really enjoyed the presentation. Everyone did a great job," Salmonson said. "The students don't really get what they are going to see until they actually see it. This presentation helped them. They said it was more exciting than they thought it was going to be."

During the actual tours at PJK, students were given hardhats and safety instructions before loading back into the buses to tour the quarry. The quarry, which sits on the Weaky Peaky fault line, was a huge hit with students as were the 100-ton Caterpillar dump trucks the company uses.

After the quarry tour, students were driven by the recycling center where they heard Fleutte and Brodeur tout the benefits of recycling roof shingles, concrete and reclaimed asphalt.

“We even recycle parts off of old PJK plants,” Fleutte added.

At the end of the tour, students Shana McGrainer and Eric Martin were quick to note how much they enjoyed the field trip.

“We’re learning about rocks and minerals, so this was awesome,” McGrainer said.

“We’re also learning about fault lines,” Martin added. “This trip was fun.”

Since 1923, P.J. Keating Company’s primary business is quarrying stone, manufacturing Hot Mix Asphalt and the construction of Asphalt Paving Projects. Headquartered in Lunenburg with locations in Dracut, Acushnet and Cranston, Rhode Island, it is one of the largest stone and asphalt producers in Massachusetts.

For more information on P.J. Keating Company, visit www.pjkeating.com.