Pasta Paleontology

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TIME: 40-minute period.

PROCEDURES:

1. Give each student or group of students a bag of pasta. Tell them to pretend that they are paleontologists. Their assignment is to take these bones and put them together to make a dinosaur skeleton.
2. Give students enough time to construct their dinosaur, then encourage them to travel around the classroom to examine the dinosaurs made by the other students.
3. Discuss differences and similarities in the dinosaurs. Plant-eating dinosaurs usually walked on all four legs. Meat-eaters usually walked on their two hind legs. Plant-eaters often had some sort of protective device (horns, plates, etc.). Have students identify the plant-eaters and the meat-eaters made by classmates.
4. Record characteristics used to identify each pasta dinosaur.
5. Discuss the importance of a paleontologist having knowledge of biology, anatomy, etc. Have students think about identifying unknown animals from strange bones.

ASSESSMENT:

• Students are actively involved in the construction of a "pasta dinosaur."
• Record why they picked certain pasta to be certain bones.
• Have students observe all constructions. Verbal discussion of similarities and differences should be supported by their written observations.

Teaching Suggestions:

• Tell students that their dinosaur will be lying on the table, not standing up. Relate this to problems encountered by paleontologists working with real dinosaur fossils.

Further Challenge:

• Give students pictures of dinosaurs and have them identify them as plant-eaters or meat-eaters.

OBJECTIVES:

• *Use different types of pasta to represent bones as they reconstruct a "dinosaur."*
• *See one of the problems of a paleontologist as they view the variety of "dinosaurs" that are constructed from the "bones."*

Materials and Equipment:

• 1 baggie per student or group containing an equal assortment of pasta (elbows, spaghetti broken into smaller equal size pieces, small and large rigatoni, rotini, 1 shell pasta to represent head).