

## Chilling studies

### *Pink Palace educator talks survival in Antarctica with Bailey Station students*

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Bailey Station APEX students listen to Alex Eilers, an educator at the Pink Palace Museum, about her future trip to Antarctica. She explained to students how to survive the continent's freezing temperatures and discussed what she will be studying.

Did you know they attach monitors to the heads of Weddell seals with glue?

Neither did the fourth-grade APEX students at Bailey Station Elementary.

But no worries, they also learned that the monitors are shed naturally by the seals molting in a year's time.

As part of a study on survival, the students in Brenda Silberman's APEX class were treated to a visit from Alex Eilers, an educator at the Memphis Pink Palace Museum. Eilers will travel to Antarctica in February as part of a Polartrec team to study Weddell seals.

Eilers spoke about the challenges of traveling to the continent, which is billed as the coldest, driest, highest and windiest place on Earth.

As she passed around heavy boots and an oversize down parka, she explained that keeping dry, warm, hydrated and nourished were important factors to survival. The fact that chocolate is carried for quick energy won points with the class.



Bailey Station Elementary students Victoria Ouyang (left) and Tiana Mao examine some of the equipment used by researchers who travel to Antarctica.

Eilers also explained that the teeth in a Weddell seal skull offers clues to how the animal hunts and breathes in the ice. Monitoring devices and the tags used to mark the seals were examined by the students. The study will focus on determining where the seals travel during the winter and evidence of temperature, salinity and depth of water will be recorded and analyzed.

The students who have been conducting research and reading a novel set in Antarctica, asked many questions about Eilers' methods of travel and how she will deal with 24 hours of daylight.

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