Can You Dig It?

Students take on the role of paleontologists as they participate in a hands-on “fossil” hunt.

Curriculum/State Standards
Students will investigate fossils as evidence of organisms that lived long ago
a. Investigate fossils by observing authentic fossils or models of fossils or view information resources about fossils as evidence of organisms that lived long ago.
b. Describe how a fossil is formed.

Overview
Students will take on the role of paleontologist as they participate in a hands-on “fossil” hunt. While on the “dig,” students will be learning about different fossil types.

Objectives
The students will explain how scientists use fossils as evidence of organisms that lived long ago and defend the use of fossils as evidence of past organisms. The students will use sketches or models to represent fossils and organisms. The students will observe and describe the difference between fossil types.

Materials
Fossils Tell of Long Ago by Aliki
Box made with 1x6 boards and a plywood backing sheet, sand, shovels, Chips Ahoy chocolate chip cookies (there will be several cookies placed in the box with sand in it), paintbrushes, toothpicks, napkins

Readiness Activity
Complete a KWL Chart on fossils with students prior to the activity. Teacher can also read the book Fossils Tell of Long Ago by Aliki to prepare students for the fossil dig.

Strategies/Activities
Ask the students if they have ever seen a fossil. Show some sample fossils which came with the science materials. Students will be divided into three groups. One group will complete an inquiry activity in which they will be presented with 3 – 4 different fossil sketches with information tags. Using the sketch and info tag, students must hypothesize what the fossil is and how it ended up in the location it was found. The second group will play a concentration match game using vocabulary words and definitions (fossil, organism, evidence, paleontologist, true fossils, cast fossils, mould fossils, and trace fossils).
In the third group, each student will have a chance to become a ‘paleontologist for a day’ in this fossil dig activity. Students are given instructions, then each student will do the following: 1. Call students up by learning groups. Have each student dig with a small shovel through the box of sand to find a “fossilized rock” (which is a chocolate chip cookie). Tell students not to eat the cookie!! 2. Each student will take their “fossilized rock” back to their seat and brush off the excess sand with a “fossil brush” (paintbrush). 3. Using a “fossil pick” (toothpick), students will pick the “fossils” (chocolate chips) out of their “rocks” (cookies). 4. When all students are finished, we will discuss as a class which types of fossils were represented in the activity. The chocolate chips that were picked out resemble true fossils and the indents that remain from the chips resemble moulds.

Special Needs Adaptations: Attention

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Deficit Disorder- watch this student more carefully and give him/her extra instructions to make sure he/she follows the correct procedure during the activity.

Extension/Enrichment: Students can search their own backyards at home to find objects that have or could become fossilized.

**Culminating Activity**
After each group has participated in the different activities, hand out a chocolate chip cookie to each student for them to eat.

Closure: Review all of the types of fossils in a class discussion.

**Evaluation Method**
Ticket out the door to ensure that each child can identify each type of fossil.