



September 2009

Dear Family,

During the next few months, our class will be learning about the nutrients in foods as part of our Food Chemistry science unit. We will be testing some common liquids and foods to find out which nutrients they contain.

We know that children do better in school when their families are actively involved in their learning. Here is one on-going activity that you can do with your child at home to help your child begin thinking about foods and nutrition.

Family Activity: Have a conversation about the various foods that your family eats often. Find out if your child knows what foods are components of their favorite dishes. If s/he isn't aware of all of the ingredients in their favorite dishes, show them. For example, if pizza is a favorite food, help your child realize that in most pizzas, wheat flour, oil, and water make up the crust, tomatoes are the major ingredient in the sauce, and cheese is the main topping along with other foods you may use as toppings. If pepperoni is a topping, discuss where it comes from.

Show your child how to look at package labels in order to find out the ingredients that are in prepared foods. Talk about which ingredients are healthy for the human body and which ones are not so healthy and should be eaten only in small amounts every once in a while.

Finally discuss with your child where various ingredients in foods come from. Help your child realize that foods do not originate at the grocery store, but have to be grown or raised somewhere and transported to Seattle. Talk about the benefits to society of eating as much food grown, raised, and produced locally as possible, so that less energy is used to transport foods grown far away. If you have a garden, get your child involved in growing some of the foods your family eats. Often if a child is involved in growing vegetables, s/he is more willing to eat them.

I am always eager to have family members come in and share their knowledge and experience related to our units of study. If you have a skill or experience related to food testing, nutrition, foods of different cultures, or "environmentally-friendly" foods that you would be willing to share with us, please call or email me.

Attached to this letter is a sheet with many suggestions for supporting your child's science understandings at school, at home, and around the Seattle area. Please keep this sheet and take advantage of the suggestions as often as possible!

Sincerely,

Family Strategies for Supporting Science

At School

- Talk to your child's science teacher about how your child is doing in class.
- Chaperone a science field trip.
- Volunteer to inventory a science kit for the teacher.
- Volunteer in your child's science class.

At Home

- Encourage your child to ask questions about the world as much as possible, and avoid giving answers. Encourage observation, exploration, investigation, or research instead.
- Ask your child thoughtful questions and teach her to provide evidence for her thinking by using the word "because" in her explanation (I think the fish is dead *because* it is floating upside down.).
- Encourage your child to draw detailed, colorful, labeled illustrations of things he is observing at home or school.
- Read non-fiction books together in your family's home language.
- Read the newspaper together: talk about a science-related article.
- Talk about the natural history of your country of heritage (e.g., Mt. Pinatubo in the Philippines, Mt. Fuji in Japan, tsunami in southeast Asia, Himalayas in India, Great Rift Valley in Eastern Africa).
- Cook together: talk about what you are doing as you are cooking.
- Work together in the garden: plant vegetables, start a family compost or a worm bin.
- Go through a kitchen cabinet: talk about which foods are good for you and which aren't; look at the ingredients and nutritional information on labels.
- Have your child help with small (and safe) repairs around the house.
- Find safe experiments to do together at home.
(www.exploratorium.edu/science_explorer/ has a great list)
- Listen to "Science Friday" on National Public Radio together.
(Fridays, 8-10pm on KUOW 94.9 FM)
- Choose appropriate science-related programs on TV to watch with your child:
Public Television (KCTS, Channel 9)
Discovery Channel
Animal Planet Channel
National Geographic Channel
Nature Channel
- Choose appropriate science-related websites to view with your child:
Bill Nye, The Science Guy (www.nyelabs.com)
How Stuff Works (www.howstuffworks.com)
Cool Science for Curious Kids (www.hhmi.org/coolscience)
Extreme Science (www.extremescience.net)
Cool Cosmos (<http://coolcosmos.ipac.caltech.edu>)
Science News for Kids (www.sciencenewsforkids.com)
Mt. St. Helen's Cam (<http://www.fs.fed.us/gpnf/volcanocams/msh/>)

In the Seattle Area

- Go for a walk around your neighborhood: talk about how people have changed the natural environment in positive and negative ways; come up with ideas for how your family could make more positive changes in your neighborhood; talk about the landforms you see and how they were formed (e.g., Mt. Rainier).
- Go to the public library: find books about animals, insects, inventions, electricity, natural disasters, space.
- Go to the beach at low tide (e.g., Lincoln Park, Alki Beach, Carkeek Park).
- Take a trip to the...

Pacific Science Center 206.443.2001 (www.pacificsciencecenter.org)

Woodland Park Zoo 206.684.4800 (www.zoo.org)

Seattle Aquarium 206.386.4300 (www.seattleaquarium.org)

Seattle Children's Museum 206.441.1768 (www.thechildrensmuseum.org)

Museum of Flight 206.764.5720 (www.museumofflight.org)

Admission is free the first Thursday of every month

Science Fiction Museum 206.724.3428 (www.sfhomeworld.org)

Admission is free from 5-8pm the first Thursday of every month

Burke Museum 206.543.5590 (www.washington.edu/burkemuseum/)

Mount Saint Helens 360.449.7800 (www.fs.fed.us/gpnf/mshnvm/)

Mt. Rainier National Park 360.569.2211 (www.nps.gov/mora/)

Univ. of WA Arboretum 206.543.8800 (<http://depts.washington.edu/wpa/>)

Tours at 1pm on first and third Sundays each month (meet at Graham Visitor's Center). Information about rental of self-guided packs on-line.

Volunteer Park Conservatory 206.684.4743

(www.cityofseattle.net/parks/parkspaces/VolunteerPark/conservatory.htm)

Camps & Classes

- Find out about the Pacific Science Center camp every summer in Seattle. Scholarships are available. (206.443.2925)
www.cmiregistration.com/user/org/category.jsp?id=2367&org=135
- Coyote Central offers year-round classes for 5th-9th grade students that include science and technology-related activities such as cooking, building soapbox derby cars, welding, glass blowing, robotics, and lots more. Scholarships are available. (206.323.7276)
www.coyotecentral.org/