

LETTER TO FAMILY

Cut here and paste onto school letterhead before making copies.

Science News

Dear Family,

Our class is beginning a new science unit using the **FOSS Environments Module**. We will investigate several different plants and animals to discover the structures and functions that serve in growth and survival and the environments that support their well-being, and attempt to determine the optimum environments for some of the organisms.



The news is full of discussions of the environment—environmental issues, environmental protection, environmental activism, and more. Environmental issues are complex because environments are complex. Our studies will not range into issues, but will deal with the more fundamental question: What is an ecosystem?

Ecosystems can be analyzed in terms of the nonliving components (temperature, moisture, light, and so forth) and living components (organisms). This analysis can take time and often requires close observation and interpretation of results. The interactions among the organisms in food chains and food webs, and the interactions of the organisms with the nonliving environment is the study of ecology. We expect to work with lots of plants and animals to start understanding how organisms flourish when provided with an environment that is just right for them.

Watch for Home/School Connection sheets that I will be sending home from time to time. The activities described on them suggest ways you and your child can extend the environmental inquiry into your home, neighborhood, and community. If possible, take a family field trip to a local aquatic environment to see what lives there and to ponder the environmental factors that affect those organisms there. At another time, you might set up a specialized environment in your home to raise brine shrimp, or embark on a minisafari, looking into microenvironments to see what insects and their kin are living nearby. Perhaps your discoveries will start some family discussions about environments and ecosystems.

We're looking forward to weeks of fun with organisms and their environments! You can get more information on this module by going to www.fossweb.com. If you have questions or comments, or have expertise you would like to share with the class, please drop me a note.

Sincerely,