

Dear Family Member,

Welcome to our first unit of study, “Plants and Animals Grow and Change.”

This year, our first grade students will build literacy and language skills by participating in ten cross-disciplinary units of study in our Benchmark Advance Program. Each three-week unit features a topic, ranging from economics to earth science, history and culture to themes in literature, and more. As students read poems, stories, plays, and informational articles, they will strengthen their reading and writing skills and strategies, participate in meaningful collaborative conversations, and make connections to their other content area studies. We look forward to sharing your child’s progress with you!

At the start of each unit, I will send home a letter like this one, introducing the unit focus and skills your child is learning. I will also suggest activities you and your child can do together at home to build on the work we’re doing in class.

In this unit, students will learn how living things grow and change. For example, they will read informational texts about the life cycle of a frog as well as that of an oak tree. They will also explore fiction, fables, and poetry featuring living things that grow and change.

This unit is sure to inspire deeper interest in a fascinating topic that you can explore further at home.

As always, should you have any questions about our reading program or about your child’s progress, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

Plants and Animals Grow and Change

In this unit, we'll read how plants and animals grow and change while considering the question "Why do living things change?" Here are some activities designed to continue the conversation of how living things change and to build on the skills and concepts your child is learning in school. Who knows? Maybe you'll learn a thing or two alongside your child!

Topic Connection

Plant It!

To see a life cycle in action, grow a plant with your child. Purchase a package of seeds and plant them in a cup, pot, your yard, or a community garden. Help your child record her process step by step. Then create a chart for your child to observe and record the plant's growth. Include a space for date and description. She may draw and/or write her observations.

Vocabulary Connection

Word Hunt

Your child is learning words associated with living things, such as **caterpillar, froglet, gills, animal, food, fox, grass, tree, twigs, woods, hatch, plant, root, seed, stem, trunk, tree, bird, duck, swan**. Write down these words, and discuss the meaning of each. Then go on a nature walk, or explore books about nature if you live in a city. Together with your child, find examples of as many of these words as you can, saying the word as you find them.

Comprehension Connection

Circle of Life

Some of the selections we'll be reading in class feature a sequence text structure to describe the life cycle of living things. Recognizing and understanding sequence in a text is an important reading skill. Support this skill as you explore life cycles with your child. Brainstorm a favorite animal, such as a pet, a farm animal, or a rain forest species. Help your child research the life cycle of that animal at the library or online. Together, take notes about each step of the animal's life cycle. Finally, help your child construct a life cycle, using words and pictures showing the sequence of steps in the life cycle.

Phonics Connections

Make-a-Word

In our phonics instruction, your child is learning to recognize the short o sound, as in frog. On four index cards or small pieces of paper, write the letters -ot, -og, -ox, -op, and -ock. Shuffle the cards. Turn over the top card and say a word that ends with the two letters. For example, if the letters are -ot, you might say rot. Then your child says another word. Keep going back and forth until you can't think of any more words that end in those two letters. Then move on to the next card.