

Dear Family Member,

Welcome to our next unit of study, “Observing the Sky.”

I’m excited to begin our eighth unit in the Benchmark Advance program. As with the previous units, I am suggesting activities you and your child can do together at home to build on the work we’re doing in class.

In this unit, your child will read and compare selections featuring the sky and objects we observe there, such as the sun, the moon, stars, and clouds. The unit encompasses a wide range of genres, including informational texts, realistic fiction, pourquoi tales, and poetry.

The magic of stars, clouds, and more are sure to capture your child’s imagination—and yours, too!

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

Observing the Sky

In this unit, we'll read about what we see in the sky as we think in depth about the question "Why do the sun and moon capture our imagination?" Here are some activities designed to continue the conversation about observing the sky, and to build on the skills and concepts your child is learning in school. Enjoy these thought-provoking, sky-related activities with your child.

Topic Connection

Star Gazers

Go outside on a clear evening when the sky is full of stars and bring a notebook and pencil. Prompt your child to write down his observations, or you can write for him. Point out stars and constellations that you know. Be sure to observe the moon, too, noticing if it's full, half, or a sliver. When you return inside, have your child draw a picture of his observations, using his notes to guide him.

Vocabulary Connection

Sky Charades

Your child is learning new words associated with objects in the sky and tools for observation, including: **telescope, crater, sun, earth, moon, planet, rotate, stars, nucleus, clouds**. Write these words on small scraps of paper, fold them up, and put them in a container. The first player picks a word from the container, and describes it without saying what it is. The other player guesses until she gets it right. Then switch roles.

Comprehension Connection

Cloud Gazers

The selections we will read in this unit use rich, descriptive words and comparisons to help us picture the moon, sun, clouds, etc. For example, in one story, a boy and his mom describe the shapes they see in the clouds, such as a bird, a boat, and a car. Go outside with your child, and observe the clouds together. What shapes do you see?

Phonics Connections

Sound Hunt

In our phonics instruction, we are reading words with the /or/, /är/, and /ûr/ sounds, as in *farm*, *oar*, and *girl*. Go on a sound hunt in your home or neighborhood to find words that have the /or/, /är/, and /ûr/ sound at the beginning, middle, or end of the word.