

Dear Families,

Our class is beginning the Science Companion® Life Cycles Unit. The Life Cycles Unit builds on children's natural curiosity about life's diversity by selecting four organisms to study closely. Such an in-depth approach allows children to witness the remarkable growth and change living organisms experience during their life spans. Over the course of this study, patterns will emerge. Children will discover that birth, survival needs, growth and development, reproduction, and aging and death are the basic elements of a life cycle. They will also discover that within this general framework considerable variety exists.

The year begins with an examination of two familiar and relevant species: humans and trees. The children consider the life stages and life span of humans before embarking on a yearlong study monitoring growth and change in both themselves and a class tree. This extended period of study allows them to perceive the subtle changes which occur in organisms with relatively long life spans, in contrast to the dramatic changes they will observe when they study the relatively short life cycles of butterflies and pea plants during the second half of the year.

Throughout this unit, the class observes and monitors growth and change, documents details, and reports to others about the things they find along the way. By the end of the year, the children see the familiar in a new and fascinating light.

In addition to the work your child does in class, you and your child can explore this rich topic together at home in the following ways:

- Visit the library and search for books about life cycles to read together and share with the class. There are book suggestions on the Science Companion web site. This web site also features a list of other recommended web sites about life cycles. The address is: **www.sciencecompanion.com**
- Work together on the Family Link activities sent home from time to time. Your child may also want to repeat and vary some of the activities we do in class, as well as explain what they discover and learn, so please encourage their independent experimentation at home.

Throughout the school year, your child will discover that life cycles can be observed throughout nature; the unit's concepts provide a connection to the natural world that children experience every day. Hopefully, you will share some of your child's enthusiasm, thereby learning with them while helping them explore.

Sincerely,