

LETTER TO PARENTS

Cut here and paste onto school letterhead before making copies.

Science News

Dear Parents,

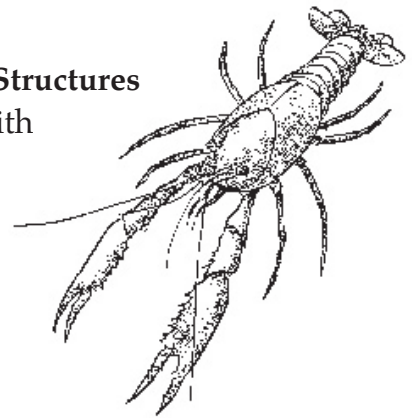
Our class is beginning a new science unit using the **FOSS Structures of Life Module**. We will be sharing space in our classroom with plants, crayfish, and land snails. It looks as if we have an interesting and exciting couple of months ahead.

In this module, children investigate the structures and behaviors of living things. You can increase your child's understanding and interest by asking about the investigations at school and by providing experiences at home. You might search for and count the seeds found in various fruits and vegetables as you prepare dinner (children will learn that all plant parts that hold seeds are technically fruits). You could grow plants from seeds, grow and eat edible sprouts, and look for the fruits and seeds of plants in your neighborhood.

Later we will be taking care of crayfish and land snails. Anything could happen, from eggs appearing to shells molting as crayfish grow. If you happen to see other animals when you are out and about with your child, you might take a moment to watch what they do, or take note of some interesting features of an animal's body. How might that behavior or body structure help the animal survive? Together, you become scientists searching for clues!

Watch for Home/School Connections. Your child may bring home one or more of these homework sheets, providing an opportunity for the whole family to look more closely at the structures of life around you.

Our classroom will be even livelier than usual in the next several weeks. If you have any questions or comments, call or come in and visit our class.



Sincerely,

HOME/SCHOOL CONNECTION

INVESTIGATION 1: ORIGIN OF SEEDS

Where there are plants, there are seeds. Take a family walk around the block or to a park. Look for seeds. Weeds are famous for producing lots of seeds—that’s one reason they are so successful.

Make a seed collection. Stick a few seeds in the spaces on this sheet with a drop of glue or a bit of tape. If you know the name of the plant the seed came from, write it in the space above the seed.

Look at each seed and try to figure out how it might move from the parent plant to a new location to grow.

Look for seeds in fruits that you eat. Stick a food seed on the sheet, too.

SEED COLLECTION

SAFETY NOTE: Although most plants are harmless, some can cause allergic reactions. Use care to select your seeds. Don’t eat anything you collect, and wash your hands after handling the seeds or plants.

HOME/SCHOOL CONNECTION

INVESTIGATION 2: GROWING FURTHER

Do you have houseplants in your home? Can you figure out why they are called houseplants? How do houseplants get the things they need to live, like water and nutrients?

Take a neighborhood field trip. Look for a plant that has all of the parts listed below. Put a check in the appropriate squares to describe the plant. If you find a weed that is OK to dig or pull up, look at the roots, too.

The plant: is the plant tall or short?

Stems: are the stems long or short?

Seeds: does the plant have many or few seeds?

Flowers: does the plant have big or small flowers?

Roots: does the plant have one main root or many?

Leaves: are the leaves big or small?

Others: is the plant by itself or with others of its kind?

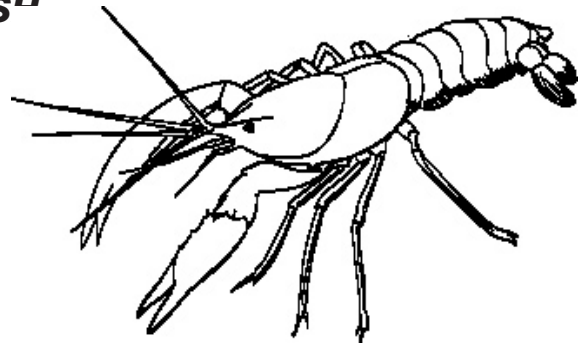
Is there anything else interesting about the plant? Draw a picture on the back of this sheet.

SAFETY NOTE: Although most plants are harmless, some can cause allergic reactions. Examine your samples with care. Don't eat anything you collect, and wash your hands after handling the plants.

HOME/SCHOOL CONNECTION

INVESTIGATION 3: MEET THE CRAYFIS

The kingdom of animals is subdivided into a handful of groups called phyla. All the animals in a phylum share fundamental similarities. For instance, humans are in the same phylum (Chordata) with the other mammals, birds, and snakes because all have backbones.



Crayfish are in the phylum Arthropoda. The name means jointed legs. Arthropods include crayfish, crabs, shrimps, scorpions, spiders, centipedes, and insects. The most common arthropods on Earth are insects. You should be able to find one (or several) insects to compare to the crayfish we have been studying in class. You may need a hand lens to look closely.

Safety note: While most insects and insect relatives are harmless, some can sting (bees, wasps, ants), and some can bite (spiders, centipedes). Observe closely without touching.

- A large, live insect is best if you can corral one for a while in a jar. You might be able to catch a cricket, roach, or grasshopper.
- Look on window sills or in light fixtures for dead insects.
- Find a small insect (or their kin) under a rock or in some other hiding place: an ant, spider, isopod, beetle, or other live critter.
- Remember to return the live insects to their habitat after you observe them.

	CRAYFISH	INSECT
How many legs?		
How many antennae?		
How many eyes?		
What kind of tail?		
How many wings?		
What kind of mouth?		
How many leg joints?		

Discuss with your family how these structures help the crayfish and insect survive.