

Sample Family Letter

Dear Families,

You may have noticed that your children are naturally curious about the world around them. They may be especially excited and interested in water, one of the most common elements in our world. Water not only offers rich opportunities for exploration, it is also part of children's everyday experiences, whether they are taking a bath, watching rain as it drips down a window-pane, or playing at the water table.

As part of our science curriculum this year we are going to investigate water. Your children will develop a scientific approach to their investigation of water as part of small group water activities inside at the water table and outdoors (when weather permits). Through their water play, children will learn about important science ideas as they explore the properties of water and investigate how water moves.

At school your children will do the following:

- Pour, scoop, and squirt with various cups, bottles, basters, and eyedroppers
- Move water up and down using clear plastic tubes and funnels
- Examine drops of water
- Explore what sinks and floats
- Draw and paint pictures that show their ideas about water
- Share their thinking and ideas

Rest assured that we have very clear rules to ensure children's safety. Although we provide smocks for children to wear as they explore water, please send an extra set of clothes for your child so that if he/she does get wet, we can help them change into dry clothes as soon as possible.

You can really help with our water exploration by encouraging children to explore water at home. Children will delight in exploring how water moves while in the bath or shower. And their experiences will be enriched when you provide plastic cups and empty shampoo bottles, so they can experiment with using different types of materials to move and control water. You can also help by thinking more about water yourself and by inviting your children to think about these questions with you. For example, you might think about how many ways you use water, where water comes from, and where water can be seen flowing or dripping. These discussions will promote your child's curiosity and interest, while also helping children to think about water as a valuable natural resource.

We can also use your assistance and expertise at school. If you have time to volunteer, come help us as we explore. An extra pair of hands is always welcome. Or if you are knowledgeable about plumbing or anything else related to our study of water, let us know. We'd love to have you share your experience with all the children.

Water is wonderful! Dive into our study with us!

Families Exploring Water

You and your child are around water all the time: in the kitchen, in the bathroom, at the beach, or in the rain. All of these experiences can present opportunities to explore water together. What's most important is to try to maintain a positive attitude about water exploration, even when there is a strong possibility that water will make some things (and people) wet. By exploring water together, you and your child will learn more about each other and the properties of water.

Tips for Indoor Water Explorations

Children will delight in exploring the properties of water and how it moves while in the bath or at the kitchen sink. And you can enrich children's experiences when you provide some of the following materials:

- Different sizes and shapes of clear plastic containers to invite filling and emptying.
- Empty shampoo bottles with small openings to help children focus on squirting and the drops themselves
- Turkey basters and empty plastic liquid soap bottles with pumps so children can explore ways to move water.
- Objects of different shapes so children can explore what sinks and floats.
- Clear plastic flexible tubes to encourage children's investigation of water flow.

While at the kitchen sink or in the bathtub, encourage children to experiment to see how they can do the following:

- Use the materials to make the water move in different directions (up and down)
- Make the water go at different speeds (slow and fast)
- Explore which objects sink and which float
- Create bubbles
- Make a drop come out of the faucet
- Turn their water flow back into a drip

Tips for Outdoor Water Explorations

You can also extend your child's investigation of water to the outdoors by taking a rainy-day walk. As you walk together, encourage your child to explore and notice the following:

- How puddles form on different surfaces (grass, sidewalks, leaves) and then disappear
- How drops drip down windowpanes or off of cars

- How water flows off roofs, leaves, tree branches, and umbrellas; water races down gutters, gullies, and streams
- How children can make some of the water stop flowing or change its direction

Tips for Water Talks

As your child explores the properties of water, how it moves, and how air behaves in it, use these tips to get the water talks flowing:

- Talk with your child about how she uses the materials. ("The funnel is really helping you get water into that bottle!")
- Ask open-ended questions. ("How did you get the water to move? How did you get the water flow to stop? How did you get the water to flow fast? Slow?")
- Describe what your child does to move water or make it stop. ("Wow! You made the water gush really fast.")
- Wonder out loud with children. ("I wonder what would happen to that bubble if you turned that tubing upside down?")

Provide your child with the support she needs to share her thinking:

- Give your child time to think before she responds to your questions and comments. Silent time is okay.
- Find ways for your child to show you what she knows (for example, using the pump to show you how she can make water move up or down).

Avoid comments that could limit your child's thinking. Avoid the following:

- Explaining the science
- Correcting ideas (rather, ask more questions)
- Moving on too quickly (allow the child to decide when to move on)