Introduction For Parents

This module of work is an introductory look at astronomy. Astronomy is a big field of science and your child will get a more advanced look at this topic in Year 6 and Year 7 (Stage 3 & 4 NSW Curriculum).

Your child may already know a few things about the sun, moon and stars and we are going to build on that knowledge. For children this age the emphasis of science is observation; learning to notice their own environment and changes in that environment. You will also work on developing some science skills while making a Moon Chart (see Lesson 4).

Each week your child will discover something new about the Solar System. The goal is for them to get a basic understanding of the ideas presented.

There are two parts to this resource; the ebook you are reading now and the ***Solar System Links*** which usually includes a short relevant picture book read aloud and, in some cases, an explanation video. ***Solar System Links*** are found in the Virtual Cupboard of your course.

Each lesson is quite simple and will take around 20 minutes to complete.

Encourage your child's questions and curiosity and if they ask you questions you don't know the answer to see if you can find the answer.

Whilst many of the activities involve conversational learning surrounding the lessons, we also encourage you to start a science notebook. It is here you can place your child's drawings, observations and charts. Observing nature is a habit that needs developing but it should not be a chore.

If you have (or can borrow) some additional astronomy books with space photography you could also get these out and place them somewhere around the house to encourage some free reading.

Do try to spend time doing some star gazing and if you don't already know a few sky constellations see if you can discover some to share with your child. Children are naturally curious, and this is a way they can be nurtured and encouraged.

I hope this resource provides a stepping-stone to enjoying the Solar System with your child.

Michelle Morrow

Lesson 1 – Our World is a Planet

Galileo, a wise man who lived around 400 years ago, used to spend his nights observing the stars and thinking about their motion. Maybe you imagine the stars to be little, stationary lamps that shine brightly every night in the sky. Galileo understood better and learned some amazing things about our planet during his long night watches.

He wasn't the first to make these discoveries, though. Galileo, however, was among the first who shared what he had learnt. He revealed his marvellous secrets in a book. Unfortunately, his books were destroyed, and he was sent jail. Men reacted angrily to his ideas because they were so different to what they had believed for years.

Have you ever observed that when you get further away from something, it appears smaller and smaller? That a man in the distance appears to be a little bigger than a child, and that a kite rises up until it resembles a speck? When you are sufficiently away, the greatest object seems to be only a little larger than a dot.

Galileo made the great discovery that almost all the stars we can see in the sky are as big as our planet, and some of them are much bigger. They appear little to us because they are so far away, exactly like our Earth would appear if viewed from a star. Then he continued by explaining that our planet, along with seven others that are quite similar, revolves constantly around the sun.

'Planets' comes from a Greek word meaning wanderer. When we look at the night sky and all the twinkling celestial bodies, we usually call them all stars. But not all the celestial bodies we see are stars, some are planets – like Venus, which is often called the morning or evening star. You will learn about the names of the other planets in the upcoming lessons. Earth is the name of the planet that we live on.

Conversation Lesson

Discuss with your child what objects they see in the sky.

1. What do you observe in the sky during the day (the moon can be seen during the day sometimes too)?
2. What do you observe in the sky at night?
3. Where do you think the sun, moon and stars go in the daytime?
4. What colour is the sky during the day and in the night?
5. Why do you think it changes?
6. Write or draw and label those objects you see in the sky.

Notes

In this discussion, include any object that your child observes. This could include a rainbow, birds, bats, planes, comets, insects, rain, satellites or the expected response of sun, moon, stars, or clouds.

Solar System Links

Picture Book Read Aloud: *Starry Messenger* by Peter Sis