

June 23, 2008

Dear Students and Parents;

I hope that your summer has gotten off to a great start. Be sure to get outside, explore nature, and enjoy the warm weather!

Each summer, I ask next year's eighth grade students to keep a science journal. In this journal you should keep a record of scientific observations, ideas, and news that catches your interest. The purpose of this assignment is for you to build a base of science topics, ideas, and current events that you are personally interested in. We hope that you will bring up ideas from your journal in class during the 2008-2009 school year, use one of the ideas to develop a science fair project, or further develop one of the observations for a science assignment or project.

Following are the requirements for the summer science journal:

- The journal should be kept in a **bound notebook**. If you choose to type your journal, please place in a report cover before turning in. Please keep in mind that students will continue to add to the journal during the school year.
- **You should make a minimum of five entries.**
- The entry should begin with a one-paragraph summary of the topic and should include where you heard of it, followed by a one-paragraph personal reaction to the topic. Your reaction could include your how the topic makes you feel, questions you have about the topic, and/or things that the topic reminds you of.
- Look for ideas everywhere. Potential sources of science topics include newspapers, magazines, the television news, and your personal experience (for example, you might see an interesting rock formation while on vacation, or you might notice behavior of birds in your yard). See the other side of this letter for an example.
- Feel free to conduct follow-up research using the Internet, books, or by conducting an experiment. However, this is not required.
- The grading rubric for the Summer Science Journal is on the back of this letter.

**The journals are due to Ms. Finnerty on the first day of school.**

Please feel free to contact Ms. Finnerty by email with any questions or concerns. I will be happy to correspond with you about your science journal or about any science fair ideas that you have. I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Ms. Finnerty  
[vfinnerty@littletonps.org](mailto:vfinnerty@littletonps.org)

## Example entry:

June 28, 2008

Today I read in the Boston Sunday Globe that salt runoff from roads like Interstate 93 is getting into lakes, rivers and streams in New Hampshire. The article says that if the concentration of salt is too high, microorganisms, plants, and fish die. Recently, the amount of salt in several bodies of water was tested and found to be one-third higher than the state limits. The salt concentration also depends on the amount of rain, because a lot of rain dilutes the salt.

This article makes me wonder about the problems with salt in Massachusetts. I know that some roads have signs that say that they don't use salt, but most of them, including my road, use salt in the winter. I wonder how much salt there is in the streams, ponds, and rivers around here. We put salt on our driveway, and Oak Meadow puts salt on the parking lot. I never really thought about where the salt went after it melted the ice, but now I wonder what damage it is doing to the plants and animals around here.

Notes: This entry is based on an actual article. Notice that this journal entry could lead to an interesting science fair project, and could be connected to class discussions about weather, ecology, geology, chemistry, and evolution (to name a few).

Please do your best on the entries, but don't get stressed and worried about them. The idea is for you to notice science all around you and to think a little more about what you see and hear. Get excited about science! Have fun! **Keep your eyes wide open!**

8<sup>th</sup> Grade Summer Science Journal Grading Rubric (15 homework points)

Section	Criteria	Not Attempted	Below Expectations	Meets Requirements	Exceeds Requirements
Number of entries	At least five entries				
Summary Paragraph	Topic is clearly summarized in a well-written paragraph and includes the source.				
Reaction and Follow-up	Your thoughts on the subject are clearly described and show effort in thought. One complete, well-written paragraph is written				