



Yale-New Haven
Teachers Institute®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2005 Volume IV: The Sun and Its Effects on Earth

Our Place in Space

Guide for Curriculum Unit 05.04.02
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What do scientists and children have in common? They both feel excitement when new discoveries are made. For children, this excitement can capture their imagination and introduce them to the fundamentals of math and science. My goal in this unit is to help this generation of students grow up feeling more at home in this vast, awesome, and exciting universe.

This unit is designed for students in grades two through four. I find that at the beginning of third grade many of my students do not even know their addresses and telephone numbers. How can I help these students understand that they are not only part of their family, neighborhood, and city but also part of the Universe? My job as a teacher is to make them feel at home with the information. To begin at home, our Earth is a member of the family of planets and moons known as the solar system. Orbiting our star, the Sun, are nine planets, and assorted satellites with their own special characteristics. Our solar system is also shared with assorted debris in the form of asteroids and meteoroids.

Many teachers would love to include astronomy in their classroom but they are often held back because their own background and training in the subject is weak or outdated. This unit is designed to build background knowledge of the Solar System as well as provide resources to obtain current information to teach this content area. It is also designed to instill in students a curiosity and concern for their natural world and create critical thinkers and problem-solvers. Students need to see connections among the various disciplines of science, mathematics, and the humanities, as well as between what they learn at school and beyond.

(Recommended for Science, grades 2-4.)

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