Science class meets three times a week for forty-five minutes. There is seldom any science homework, but there are three class projects that require some extra time at home: the Fall quarter project is the Ice Cube Cooler; the Winter Quarter project is making an invention; and the Spring quarter project is making a habitat for crickets. Details about class projects (expectations, due dates, etc.) will be posted on my web page during the course of the year (http://people.ucls.uchicago.edu/~ghanck/). You may also contact me by email at: ghanck@uchicago.edu

This year students will be keeping Science Notebooks in science class. They will keep all their science work (lab experiments, reflections in their science “journals,” plans for their science projects, etc.) in a loose-leaf binder. At the end of the year they should have a complete record of all their science work to bring home. If students do extra projects at home, they may add these to their notebooks if they choose to do so.

Children are natural scientists because they possess unquenchable curiosity and an experimental approach to the world. Children want to know how things work; they enjoy trying out new solutions to problems; and they want to learn the reasons why things happen the way they do. The emphasis in third grade science builds on this readiness to learn about the natural world, and also gives children some tools for organizing their curiosity and making their examination of what they experience more systematic and reliable. Through class discussion, whole class instruction, and laboratory “experiments,” children are taught to observe, reflect, question, and pursue answers to interesting problems.

In science class the emphasis is not on learning “right” answers. The emphasis is on how science discovers reliable ways to articulate and answer questions, and on finding out why the “accepted” answer is sometimes no longer an adequate answer. For all these reasons, in science class students begin to learn how to distinguish between making observations (using one’s senses to make sense of the world) and making inferences (plausible and logical explanations for what was observed).

Here are the science units that will be covered this year: observation and the five senses; states of matter, magnetism, the solar system, simple machines and inventions, ecology, and insects.

I fully appreciate the wealth of professional and scientific expertise that Lab School parents possess. Any parents who wish to share their experience, expertise, or interests with our science classes are encouraged to make arrangements to do so. Guest “lecturers” are always welcome!

My web page contains many science links that children and parents should find useful. Here is the link: http://people.ucls.uchicago.edu/~ghanck/