

National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) Position Statement

Parent Involvement in Science Education

The National Science Teachers Association strongly advocates parent involvement in science education. Parents play an essential role in the success of students in schools. Parents who encourage the daily use of science concepts and process skills enhance their child's ability to learn the skills necessary for success.

- Seeing science everywhere. Science is a powerful way of looking at the world. Parents can help their child feel the excitement of observation and discovery. They can promote growth in thinking and problem-solving abilities. Scientific skills and methods practiced in everyday life help explain the nature of things and how they work. Successful experiences ensure the development of a positive attitude about science.
- Doing science together. By sharing science experiences, parents demonstrate that learning is an important and enjoyable process. The parents also become more aware of the importance of science in their own lives. This positive involvement may be the most important lesson learned.
- Developing a variety of skills. Parents should focus on skills such as observing, noticing change, recognizing patterns, building models, exploring, experimenting, estimating, measuring and sharing information. These skills are essential to improving scientific understandings.
- Finding the appropriate level. It is important for parents to be aware of their child's developmental level. Parents should continually evaluate the child's needs and readiness for new materials and challenges. They should ask their child's science teacher for developmentally appropriate strategies and ideas. Attempting to force the child to understand something for which he or she is not ready can lead to frustration and a negative attitude toward science.
- Suggestions. How parents can become more involved:
 - Let the child take the lead, and then build on his or her interests.
 - Take time to "do" science, helping the child explore his or her world.
 - Talk with your child and listen to his or her explanations and questions instead of just giving answers.
 - Be prepared to say "I don't know." Ask questions to help the child learn to search for solutions.
 - Be enthusiastic! Let the child see your curiosity.
 - Be ready for teachable moments!
 - Teach safe habits as a way of life.
 - Encourage the child's day care facility or school to have science-related activities.
 - Look for community organizations with science-related programs nearby and take advantage of these services.
 - Explore science in the community. Visit such places as museums, airports, gardens, planetariums, recycling centers, treatment plants, shorelines, and weather stations, and resources.
 - Develop a resource library at home! Gather materials from bookstores, science museums, electronic bulletin boards. Collect computer programs, reference books, posters, databases, and so on.

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