



# Connecting With Families

*Breaking down barriers to science*

**Science can seem like an overwhelming subject and may intimidate many families. Try these tips and tricks to help families become more comfortable with science.**

## Use Readily Available Materials

There is a misconception that in order to do science one must have special equipment, such as beakers or special chemicals. A great way to get families involved in doing more science is to demonstrate that science can be done with a variety of materials that can be found at home. For example, doing sink or float with materials found outside or melting ice cubes with salt are easy activities that can be done with readily available supplies. Showing families that science can be done with easily accessible materials may help families become more comfortable doing science with their children.

## Activity Set-up

Another great way to encourage families to do science with their children is to be intentional with out you set up your activities. Instead of placing all the supplies out and letting the children start on their own, hand the materials to the adult instead. Giving the supplies directly to the adult suggests that they are supposed to engage with the activity as well.

## Communicate with Families During Your Event

### Supporting Science Connections

Observe families interacting during activities. If you see children practicing any of the process skills, point it out to their parents.

Things you can say:

- By using the different sized measuring cups to explore the kinetic sand, your child is gaining math and science skills through hands on experiences.
- If a child says “I made a small ball of sand with this cup” You can say, “You are using measuring tools! Scientists use tools like you all the time, you are doing science!”

While families are exploring you can model open-ended questions for parents by asking:

- What does the sand remind you of?
- What types of tools do you like using?
- What kinds of patterns can you make in the sand?

## Encourage Families to do Science at Home

Engaging parents in science at specific events is only one piece of the puzzle. It is important to also empower families to do science outside of the classroom and incorporate it more in everyday life. Encouraging science at home can be done in a variety of ways:

- Newsletters
  - A great technique for fostering science outside the classroom is sending out newsletters. A simple sheet with some easy activities and the date of your next event helps promote your event and learning at home.
- Signage
  - Try placing signs around your venue that suggest different activities that they can do at home to practice different science process skills.
- Verbal Cues
  - Try talking with families about ways they could do the same activities at home with materials they already have.
- Take-Homes
  - Cards
    - The Sciencenter provides parent-take homes, which are small cards that talk about the activity they did at the event and a similar activity that they can do at home.
  - Kits
    - Try putting together a small activity kit complete with supplies and instructions, and hand these out to the parents. This is a great way to help encourage families to work together on science activities at home.

### Credits and rights

Developed by the Sciencenter for the Collaborative for Early Science Learning.  
Contact: Bethany Resnick [bresnick@sciencenter.org](mailto:bresnick@sciencenter.org)  
Copyright 2018, Sciencenter, Ithaca NY



This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services