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Let's Delve Into the World Of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math

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Do you cringe when your child asks for help with a math problem? Do you panic when your child wants to enter the science fair? Are your kids using technology you've never heard of? STEM—Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math—is a vital part of our kids future and education. STEM seems like it is everywhere. Business, education, and youth programs are all singing the praises of STEM. This week, let's investigate the parent's role in encouraging STEM learning.

Many parents become extremely apprehensive when we start to talk about science and math. Parents in particular, who's educational and career backgrounds are not geared in the sciences can be especially fearful. Parents can play a

major role in getting their kids interested in these subjects. Two-thirds of the girls who reported an interest in science, math or engineering had mothers or fathers who encouraged these interests as compared to only one-third of girls who reported little interest in STEM. This is true of both genders as the role of parents has been researched in studies by Jon D. Miller of the University of Michigan. The National Science Teachers Association believes that involvement of parents and caregivers in their children's learning is crucial to their interest and ability to learn science. Research by X. T. Fan and Chen shows that when parents play an active role, kids achieve greater success as learners. This is regardless of their socioeconomic status, racial background or the parent's own level of education. The same research shows the more intense the parental involvement, the more confident and engaged their children are as learners and receive more benefits from their achievements.

Parents play an absolutely critical role in encouraging and supporting their children’s science learning at home, in school, and in the community. A parent’s role can and should be more than making sure they get their homework done. Kids are naturally curious about the world. Parents can nurture this curiosity by creating a positive and safe environment at home for exploration and discovery. Schools have already begun to emphasize the importance of STEM. Parents who are actively engaged in their child’s learning can experience greater success throughout their educational experiences from preschool to college.

Read and join Science of Parenting blog, <http://blogs.extension.iastate.edu/scienceofparenting>, where we discussed specific ways parents can encourage science learning. We also provided ideas on how you can create a “science learning friendly” home. We also discussed how parents can be a more actively engaged parent with your child’s teacher and school. As always, we are hopeful that you will share ideas on how you have already begun to cultivate science learning with your child on our Science of Parenting blog. For more research-based information and education to help families make decisions that improve and transform their lives, visit www.extension.iastate.edu/humansciences.

Subscribe to ISU Extension’s Science of Parenting blog for the latest research related to raising kids and teens. Get short, timely messages from Science of Parenting on Twitter.

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