

Pointers For Parents

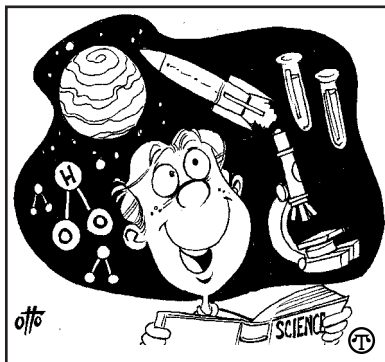
How To Raise A Science-Smart Child

(NAPSA)—When was the last time you said to your child, “Try it and see what happens?” The beginning of scientific exploration, like the beginning of all creative endeavors, is a willingness to experiment and be open to what happens next. A curious mind (your child’s) coupled with an open mind (yours) can sow the seeds of a life-long desire to explore the world around us and discover its secrets.

The wonderful thing about encouraging the interests of your child is that you don’t have to know the answers yourself. In fact, it may be better that way. The two of you can discover the answers together. Talk about where to look to find answers—the library, the Internet, professional friends, local museums. Encourage problem-solving by continuing to ask questions. Why do you think that happened? What do you think will happen next? Help them think critically about the claims around them. Does that seem realistic? Can we test it?

The “Why” Factor

Too many questions from your young one? Before you let go an exasperated sigh, remember that stubbornness and curiosity are the two traits often cited by some of today’s leading scientists when asked to describe the ideal scientist. Ted Hoff, inventor of the world’s first microprocessor, advises students to be insatiably curious about many things and stubborn enough to get their ques-



tions answered. “If an answer I got didn’t satisfy me, I would continue to explore a question until I was satisfied.” Mariangela Lisanti, winner of the 2001 Intel Science Talent Search and a \$100,000 scholarship to Harvard University, remembers, “When I was small, I would always ask my mother, ‘Why?’ I hope to be able to do that my entire life—always asking, wondering, discovering.”

A Critical Path

By fifth or sixth grade your child will have been introduced to the scientific method, a fundamental tool for critical thinking and the basis for much of our decision-making throughout life. Ask a question, formulate an answer, and then test it by gathering more information and doing hands-on research to arrive at the best conclusion. It’s a process that applies not only to school science projects, but to buying a car, choosing a college, even deciding how to vote in the next election.

As your child enters high

school, opportunities to conduct real science increase greatly with specialized courses and prominent science competitions. Often this is when a student’s innate curiosity is drawn to a particular field of interest and they develop the skills to complete more sophisticated science research projects. Science competitions provide the opportunity for your child to get validation from someone other than an indulgent parent or favorite teacher. Judges are usually working scientists, experts in their fields with plenty of good advice to offer.

Stepping Stone to Success

More than one successful student has said that competing built their self-confidence and that meeting with real scientists stimulated their thinking and gave them assurance that they could indeed do science. Competitions can be a stepping stone to great scientific achievement. For example, alumni from the Science Talent Search, a prestigious competition now sponsored by Intel Corporation, include five Nobel prize winners and ten recipients of the MacArthur Foundation “genius” grant. Participating in a competition is also a great way for students to meet like-minded peers, form life long friendships and make invaluable professional contacts. The door to future opportunities is wide open. And you can start your child on this successful path today by saying, “Try it and see what happens.”