

10 QUESTIONS

YOUR KID'S SCIENCE TEACHER WISHES YOU WOULD ASK



For the same reasons we encourage our children to be active participants in classroom discussions, parents should take advantage of opportunities to talk with teachers. Learn more about science teaching and learning in your child's classroom, whether it's during back-to-school night, teacher conferences, or at another point during the school year.

Science lessons deliver some of the most engaging and exciting activities of your child's day. Children are inherently curious and high-quality science instruction allows them to channel that energy and wonder into discovering more about the world around them. As they grow older, science learning helps them develop the necessary skills and practices to solve real-world challenges and build important life skills.

The more you know, the more you can support your child's science learning at home. So what should you know about science education at school? Start with these key questions for your child's teacher:

1. **How is science taught in your classroom? What methods or activities do you use? Are there sample lessons I can review?**
2. **What science topics will my child learn and what skills will he/she master by the end of this year? How does this relate to what my child learned last year and what he or she will learn next year? How does it relate to what my child is learning in math, other subjects, or the world in which we live?**
3. **Do you have access to local informal science opportunities? Will there be field trips to local museums or science centers?**
4. **Will there be science homework and what will it look like?**
5. **What types of questions should I ask my child about science on a day-to-day basis?**
6. **What can I do to support my child's science learning? Are there science projects or activities we can do together at home, or apps, websites, or learning games we could explore?**
7. **How does the school support education in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) subjects? Is STEM incorporated throughout the day and if so, how? Are there after school STEM clubs, programs, or science and engineering fairs that would support my child's learning?**
8. **How will learning be assessed? Will you use only formal assessments like tests or will children be able to show you what they know through other avenues?**
9. **What happens if my child doesn't achieve the learning goals of a lesson or unit of study? Can he or she get extra help?**
10. **What types of science equipment and technology will be used throughout the year?**

There are no standard answers to these questions, but a teacher who creates a rich classroom environment for science exploration will be happy to discuss them with you. And while you are having this valuable conversation, look around. These are just some of the signs that the classroom environment supports science learning:

- **Space and storage:** Science requires “stuff.” Whether the shelves are filled with rocks and leaves or hand lenses and measuring instruments, it's important that teachers have the materials nearby to teach science.
- **Safety equipment:** To explore science in the mode of a scientist, your child will occasionally need eye protection, gloves, soap, and water. There are many experiences that are both simple and safe, but safety criteria must always be in mind.

Whatever the answers are to your questions, a great response to close a conversation would be, “What can I do to help?” Most teachers would be thrilled to know if you have a background in science, technology, engineering, or math, or have time and resources to share.

A strong foundation in STEM will put your child on the road to success in school and beyond. Want to know more about how to support your child's learning in science? Find helpful resources from NSTA at www.nsta.org/parents.

Want to learn about how your state might be updating its K-12 science standards for students?

Visit www.nextgenscience.org.

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