

STEM SPOTLIGHT: 7 WAYS TO PIQUE YOUR CHILD'S INTEREST IN SCIENCE



Statistics from the Department of Education show that children lose their interest in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) by the [third grade](#). “A lot of [science] programs start in high school or middle school. Our goal is to start with younger kids,” says [Andrea Hence Evans](#), founder of [Kidgineer](#), a 10-week after-school program based in Maryland that has helped 40 kids from kindergarten to fifth grade experiment with science for three hours each week. Evans says it’s never too late to pique a student's interest in STEM, but here are seven ways to help them gravitate toward it faster: 1) **Have parents reiterate that science is not impossibly difficult.** A lot of times you hear adults saying that science is difficult and so their children feel the same way. The children start out believing they can’t do something.

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2) **Enroll your child in an enrichment program.** Having programs that give children an opportunity to have fun while simultaneously learning something, or enhancing what they are learning in school will definitely increase their interest in the subject, says Evans, who is looking for a fixed location to start a science-based summer camp.

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3) **Do hands-on projects.** “When you work with kids, you need to be sure that they don’t feel bored,” says Evans. “A lot of these kids don’t even know that they are learning and that is our goal.” Allowing children to do hands-on science projects increases their interest in the subjects. Evans and her team found that a lot of schools teach students from textbooks and don’t show them anything. It’s one thing to read about a volcano, it’s another thing to build a volcano, Evans says.

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4) **Have them present their projects.** A lot of schools wait too long to provide students with opportunities to do a project. Allowing children at an early age to describe a problem, identify the solution, discuss the theories, create a project from beginning to end, and then present it makes them feel proud, says Evans. “It gives them a feeling of accomplishment ... and increases their self esteem.”

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5) **Don't underestimate your child's potential to learn.** A lot of people don't think kids in kindergarten can understand what a circuit is. "We've proven that a six year old can actually build a full series circuit and create flashlights," says Evans. "They can articulate [what they are doing] and understand what they are saying. It is truly remarkable."

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6) **Expose them to mentors with science degrees.** Show them at an early age what an actual scientist or engineer does. Evans talked about bridges with her students. Then she allowed the kids to design bridges using Popsicle sticks. They applied weight to the bridges to see which ones hold the most weight. Later they explained that this is what a civil or mechanical engineer does. Then they had actual construction people come in so that the kids could understand who designs and develops a bridge. This shows them future job options.

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7) **Show them that science is translatable to other careers.** Even if they don't go on to be an actual engineer, there are so many opportunities for people who have science degrees, says Evans (pictured here). You can go into business and law because science makes people good leaders and problem solvers, says Evans, who has a dual engineering degree from Spelman and Georgia Tech, interned at NASA in college, and works as a patent attorney. Explain to your child or teen that a science degree will open up more doors to employment and make them more marketable after college.