



## Using the **STEM** Companion with your Parents

### About the STEM Companion

This STEM Companion is for parents from parents. And we define “parent” broadly to mean biological parents, foster parents, caregivers, or any adult who is mentoring or supporting a young person. The Companion is based on questions from parents and it is written by parents. We collected the questions parents were asking about STEM, did research with groups of parents involved in STEM and asked teachers what parents ask them and also what they wish parents knew about STEM. This resulted in the questions addressed in this STEM Companion for Parents. We recognize that parents are busy people so the Q&A format was chosen so they could go right to their question or read the Companion in sections as time permits.

### Parents’ Important Role

We call it a “Companion” because it is intended to support parents in their starring role of supporting their child in STEM. Parents are the strongest and most common influencer children name as helping them become interested in STEM. Research shows that when parents play an active role, their children achieve greater success as learners, regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnic/racial background, or the parents’ own level of education. Even modest involvement can make a significant difference. And teachers want parent involvement. For example, the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) believes that the involvement of parents and other caregivers in a child’s learning is critical to the child’s interest in and ability to learn science.

### Engage Parents with the STEM Companion

**Good:** Thank the parent for supporting their child in participating in STEM. Share the link <http://greatercincystem.org/families/> with parents and suggest they go online or download the Companion and Resource Guide. Encourage them to share it with others. You can use the information above to stress how important their role is encouraging their child in STEM. As you have conversations with parents throughout your program you can always remind them that this resource exists. Send parents pictures of the students involved in your STEM project or activity to the parent. This helps them to feel a part of the STEM process and gives them “bragging rights” on their child.

**Great:** The above steps plus... Print out a copy (or have it printed) and provide it to your parents. Host a session to share the Companion and discuss STEM with the parents. It is easy to use the Q&A format with answers right in the Companion. Take this as an opportunity to showcase the results of their child’s work with STEM. Help the parent identify other STEM resources in our area. Note that the Resource Guide on the webpage has hundreds of ideas.

**Awesome!:** The above steps plus.....Add your own ideas. Maybe you host a tour of a local employer who hires workers with STEM skills, maybe you invite a speaker into share their career in STEM, maybe you connect your students to STEM mentors that form a long-term relationship outside of your activity. Connect your parents and students to STEM career resources. Field trips and college visits are great for parents as well as students. Use your creativity! And share your ideas using the email below. We will highlight those at a future GCSC training or collaborative meeting.

**Tip:** Since we understand that parents are busy, it can be hard to capture their attention. One thing that parents seem to spark to is an event where their child’s work is exhibited or when they can be involved in the activity.

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