



GCSC Thought Starters

Involving Families

Support Families and Students to Experience Hands-on Activities Together

Set up STEM activities for students and families, with emphasis on students taking the lead. Volunteers can move amongst families to offer coaching and support. Feature easy instructions for quick and fun activities that have no right or wrong answer.

Make the engagement easy and realistic for families' schedules:

- First day drop-off or pick up is a chance to engage families in the purpose of the program.
- The close of the program is an opportunity to have the students showcase what they have learned, in a way that engages their families. Consider providing food (always draws people in!).
- Consider location for your program, especially proximity to living and community places.
- STEM activity kits can also be brown-bagged and sent home with simple instructions. Families can snap a picture of the completed activity to send in or share on social media.

Invite effectively:

- Make it personal. Phone calls accomplish more than an email or a flyer.
- Families need encouragement too. Tell them why their engagement matters.
- Partner with volunteer(s) to be the 'STEM family' for the program that can show up for the entire group or for students who don't have families that are able to engage. Students will respond to learning next to interested adults and showing them what they have learned.

Listen to the Family Voice & Respect Differences

Involve families in program planning. Find a way (create a space & time) to hear families' ideas, interests, needs, and hopes for their students. Find out what they like to do at home (i.e. cooking, crafts, gaming) and consider how it can be tied to the program.

Be mindful that there are families of "need" and families of "means". Consider differences in availability, transportation, logistics, communication methods, etc. when designing family involvement.

Families Want STEM Info!

Balance clear explanation with language that doesn't talk down to families.

Make it two-generational. Consider how it can be helpful and practical for both students and families.

Broker information. Use effective communication channels to give families additional STEM opportunities (at library, school, community center, local museum, etc.). Introduce them to STEM professionals. Direct families to internships or apprenticeships. Present information on related advanced degrees, certifications, jobs, and careers.

Put [GCSC's STEM Companion Book](#) to work. Find ways to share parts, or all, of it with family members.

