

Science & Math Middle Schoolers

When students who like science go to programs together, they see middle schoolers like themselves who are serious about their schoolwork. Learning together not only is fun but also helps children develop positive social skills.

What do we know about middle schoolers that can help keep them interested in science and mathematics?

Early adolescents like to be active learners and to work on problems that have meaning for their own lives. They like to be with their peers and be more independent of adults. They study science and math at school, but important learning happens at home and in the community. The support parents give a child at home will make a great difference in his or her school success. Here are nine ways to encourage your middle school child in science and math learning:

Be positive and insist that science and math are important for understanding our world and preparing for a good future.

Early adolescent interests may change. They may prefer activities that they can do with their friends, at places they can get to on their own or independently at home. But they can still like science and math and can still keep working and learning. You can guide your children to keep up with science and math learning to build a strong foundation for their futures.

Encourage your child to read.

Have reading material in your home. Children entering adolescence may read fewer books (in favor of spending more time talking and being with friends). However, they do like to read magazines and newspapers. Magazines, such as Discover, Zillions, or Popular Science, are good choices to have around. A lot of up-to-date science and math is presented in these magazines. Some have student subscription rates. Information is in each magazine. Subscribe to one so it's around the house. You can read them too, and get ideas about things to talk to your child about.

Gather materials so your middle schooler can make models.

Making a model to represent the real world is a scientific way of knowing and also a popular activity with many middle schoolers. Building models from kits is a good science/math experience. But you don't need to spend money on a kit. It's easy to put together a project workshop at home. Recyclables, such as oatmeal and shoe boxes, foam, Styrofoam, and aluminum trays, film canisters, cardboard, scrap wood, rubber bands, paper clips, plus a roll of masking tape, clear tape, white glue, safety scissors, some markers, and other household items can be used to make models and do other home projects.

Sometimes a homework assignment is to make a model. You can provide an extra pair of hands and be a good listener as your child figures out what to do and how to do it.

Monitor TV viewing.

Students who are successful in their science and math courses at school watch less TV than others. Point this out to your middle schooler and limit TV viewing. Activities, such as those mentioned above, can take the place of TV when you turn it off. When your child does watch TV, look for the programs that have educational value, such as Wild America, Mr. Wizard, Newton's Apple, and Square One. These are aired on local PBS stations.

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