

Pointers For Parents

Winter: A Great Time For Science Discovery



Cool weather can help spark your child's interest in science.

(NAPSA)—When it comes to sparking a child's interest in science, it seems that cool weather could be key.

Studies by education researchers indicate that to learn science concepts well, students must discover science outside the classroom through their own hands-on experiences—and experts say exploring seasonal changes is a great way to do just that.

“Cool weather presents a great opportunity to explore nature and discover the science of ice, snow and the changing seasons with your child,” says Andy Allan, director of program development for Science Adventures camps and clubs. “Parents can be some of the best teachers—they can explain and inspire before a child has a ‘formal’ science education.” Allan offers these tips to parents to help ignite their child's interest in the world of science and discovery:

- Make time for stargazing. Using binoculars or a telescope, see what stars you can find. There are 12 major constellations visible in the cold season. Orion and Taurus are the easiest to find. Share a story about Orion with your children. Have them draw a constellation with glow-in-the-dark paint on black paper.

- Cool seasons have dry air that's great for learning about static electricity. Take an inflated balloon and rub it on a wool sweater. Sprinkle a plate with some salt

and pepper and hold the balloon over it. What happens? The seasoning jumps due to a static charge on the balloon. Rubbing the balloon causes a charge to build up that pulls on the salt and pepper.

- The kitchen is a great place to introduce simple chemistry. Set aside cooking activities that your children can help with, such as mixing and measuring. What happens when sugar is dropped into hot water? Do oil and water mix?

- Keep a weather journal. Buy a thin piece of wood three feet long. Stick it straight up in the garden. Have children record how deep the snow gets by marking the amount on the stick and measuring the marks.

- Bundle up and explore the great outdoors. What has changed since the summer? Pay special attention to changes in plants and animals. Take pictures and compare the seasons.

- After a snow or rain, go outside and look for animal tracks. Try to identify the animal that left them.

Children ages 5 to 12 can participate in Science Adventures clubs and summer camps offered at schools and community centers. Cutting-edge programming covers chemistry, physics, robotics, earth science, space and rocketry. For more information or experiments, visit www.scienceadventures.com or call 888-458-1812.