

PROMISING PRACTICES FOR ENGAGING FAMILIES

We're back with more ideas for promoting family engagement. How many times have you planned a family STEM event and found parents holding back? We know we have. In talking with advocates and leaders of STEM we learned some new ideas to remedy this dynamic. These strategies seem simple and once we heard them we thought, "If only I had known them sooner."

3 TIPS TO INVOLVE PARENTS IN STEM EVENTS

1



Photo Courtesy of Bay Area STEM Ecosystem

Be ready for family engagement and involve parents right from the start.

At family STEM events, it's common for parents to arrive and quickly cluster in the back while their kids rush to the activities. **Family Engineering** has some excellent, straightforward ideas to get parents active. They set up openers or table top activities that are ready to go the minute the first family arrives. As these first families arrive, staff make very clear that there are things to do together.

2



Photo Courtesy of Bay Area STEM Ecosystem

Use engaging, real, and relatable language and activities that all parents regardless of background, will find fun and interesting to learn about.

Elaina Oumet with **Boys & Girls Clubs of America** advises, "Don't presume parents understand or relate to "STEM." They might not know the terminology or they might rule themselves out and think it's not for them. Instead describe activities with simple, relatable language like "Make your Own Light" instead of "Come and Do STEM."

3



Train and support staff to understand that their role is to support family engagement.

Sometimes staff step in and take over an interaction in an effort to help kids and parents who are struggling through a STEM activity. Guide them to offer support and encouragement with questions like: What are you thinking about? How do you think you can go about this? We learned these tips from Harold Asturias at Lawrence Hall of Science. You can find more ideas in **Family Math** offered by the Lawrence Hall of Science.

***For more promising practices visit
www.stemnext.org/promising-practices***

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