



Frequently Asked Questions about Elementary Science

1. What books or resources are appropriate for K-5 science instruction?
Recommended materials include inquiry-based science kits to provide engaging hands on instruction for each grade-level science goal, expository texts and trade books linked to each science goal, and selected science videos for each science goal. Safety equipment such as goggles or gloves for conducting experiments may also be included. Science notebooks for each student are an appropriate format for students to record questions, predictions, materials, procedures, data, conclusions, and new questions.
2. What are resources in the community that are available to expand on the science curricula?
There are many valuable resources in Wake County that will help your child expand on the science concepts taught at his/her grade level. Family field trips to places including the NC Museum of Natural Sciences, North Carolina Botanical Gardens, JC Raulston Arboretum, Morehead Planetarium, and the Poe Health Center are just a few examples of science-rich places in the community that have specific connections with grade level concepts in the NC Standard Course of Study. In addition, many of the community parks in the area (such as Blue Jay Point, Hemlock Bluffs nature Preserve, and Lake Johnson) provide guided activities for families that correlate with NC Science Standards. Encouraging your child to check out and read non-fiction selections from the library about the science content he/she is studying is another beneficial activity to support science goals as well as literacy goals.
3. Why doesn't my child's school have a science fair?
Participation in a science fair is a site-based decision, differing from school to school. Administrators at your child's school will be able to answer this based on the specific needs of their school. Below are some links to regional and state wide science fair information:
www.ncsta.org/sciencefair/
<http://www.engr.ncsu.edu/k12outreach/ScienceFair/index.html>
4. How much time is required for science at the elementary grades?
*For K-2, 30 minutes per day or 2 hours 30 minutes per week.
For grades 3-5, 45 minutes per day or 3 hours 45 minutes per week.
In order to make time for extended science exploration, teachers can effectively integrate a wide range of literacy and mathematics skills.*

5. How can I assist the school/teacher with the science instruction?

There are three ways that family members can assist science instruction in a very helpful manner. The first way is to offer adult volunteers to help with science investigations in the classroom. Activities may include setting up or inventorying materials, washing and putting away materials, or simply being available as an extra pair of hands during an active investigation. Check with your child's teacher to get the details.

Another way for families to assist with science instruction is to purchase and donate grade level specific science supplies. A list of these supplies is available from your child's school and typically requests such household items as plastic cups, cotton balls, rubber bands, etc. These items, referred to as "consumables", are in use during every quarter of instruction. Check with the school PTA, Instructional Resource Teacher, or your child's teacher for specific lists of items needed.

Finally, family members who work in fields of science that correlate to the curriculum can arrange to be a guest speaker for a class or grade level. Again, contact your child's teacher for details.

6. How is science vocabulary taught without a textbook?

Science vocabulary is taught in several ways. Student writing in science notebooks, classroom word banks, and expository texts relating to science content are a few ways that students gain rich experience with science vocabulary. Through using vocabulary for a specific and engaging purpose, students become fluent with science terminology.