

A Note to Parents

Is your child about to participate in a science fair? Are you or your child wondering what to do or how to do it? Are you feeling nervous, anxious, or confused? Then this packet is for you!

Science fairs can be one of the most exciting parts of the entire school curriculum. They provide children with an opportunity to explore the mysteries and marvels of the world in which we live and to develop an appreciation for the work of scientists. Yet for many families the announcement of an upcoming science fair can be an upsetting experience. Parents and children ask: How do we get started? Where do we get information? What should the final project look like? How much time do we need? Parents sometimes feel that schools do not provide them with enough information on how to plan and carry out a project. Without guidelines, families may be forced to improvise, hastily carting a last-minute project into the school gymnasium moments before the start of the science fair.

This packet provides you and your child with a thorough, systematic approach to developing a successful science fair project – but it will not guarantee that your child will win a first-place ribbon or the grand prize trophy. The intent of this packet is to help your child enjoy the processes of science discovery instead of focusing on winning a prize. Success is not defined in terms of how many awards your child's science fair project earns but by how well your child uses creative and investigative skills to discover more about his or her world.

The ideas, activities, and procedures outlined in this packet will guide you and your child through an enjoyable and fascinating experience. Included are:

- How to plan and develop a project
- Sources of information and guidance
- Success factors that contribute to a display
- A host of potential projects and ideas
- How to assemble a project and write a report
- Standards used by science fair judges to evaluate projects
- A plan of action to ensure that the project will not have to be completed the night before the fair

Participating in a science fair can be a source of enormous satisfaction for your child, but it also means lots of planning and work. It is important that you offer encouragement and support whenever and wherever possible – not constructing the actual project but rather helping your child discover his or her own solutions. The value of a project lies in the amount of effort your child puts into it, not on how much work you contribute. Learning to solve problems is

something scientists do every day. That experience will be an important part of the work your child does in developing his or her project. Instead of building the entire project, we encourage you to build ideas in your child's mind. As your child works on a selected project, ask:

- What else could you contribute here?
- How would a scientist solve this?
- What other solutions can you think of?
- Is there another possibility?
- Can we look at this in another way?
- What else could we add?
- How do you feel about this project?
- Are you pleased with your effort? Why?
- Do we need anything additional?

We have designed this packet to provide you and your child with many enjoyable experiences as you participate together in the selection, investigation, and construction of a science fair project. We encourage you to support your child's efforts at every step – guiding and encouraging whenever necessary. Your child's project can provide your entire family with many enjoyable hours together – time that will have a significant impact on your child's scholastic and personal growth.

