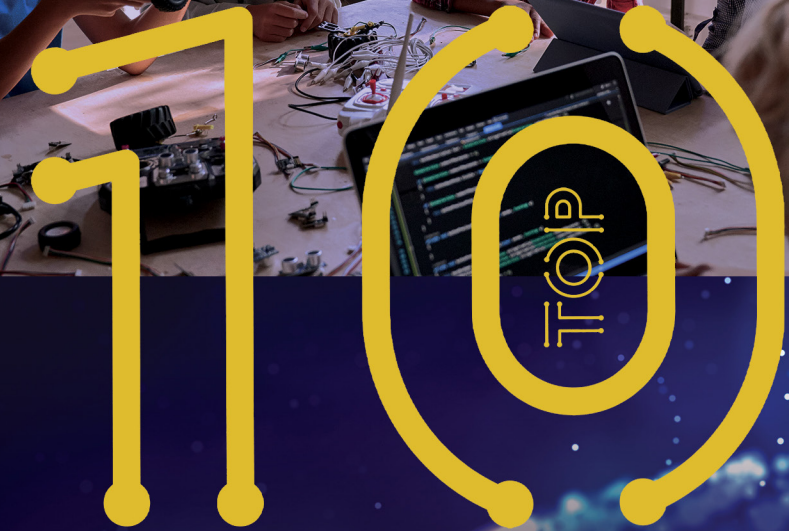


RESEARCH SHOWS THAT INTEREST IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATH (STEM) IS BUILT THROUGH PRACTICE AND ENCOURAGEMENT. USE THESE 10 STRATEGIES TO HELP YOUR CHILD GAIN THE HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE AND CONFIDENCE THEY NEED TO SUCCEED.

NCWIT is the farthest-reaching network of change leaders focused on advancing innovation by broadening participation in technology.

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WAYS TO IGNITE YOUR CHILD'S INTEREST IN STEM

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TOP 10 WAYS TO IGNITE YOUR CHILD'S INTEREST IN STEM

RESEARCH SHOWS THAT INTEREST IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATH (STEM) IS BUILT THROUGH PRACTICE AND ENCOURAGEMENT.

1

HELP THEM ENVISION SUCCESS

Expect your child to do well and communicate that clearly. Celebrate all attempts at trying new things. Recognize effort, strategies, and behaviors: "It's obvious you put a lot of work into this project." "Great idea to brainstorm and plan before jumping in!" Encouragement is a major factor in a child's decision to pursue STEM, and is especially important for girls, who often face additional barriers.

ADOPT A GROWTH MINDSET

Having a "growth mindset" means understanding that we are not born knowing how to do things, but instead learn how to do new things and improve our skills. Rather than saying, "You're smart," celebrate persistence by saying, "What did you learn from that project?"

2

SPARK INTEREST EARLY AND OFTEN

Middle school is a critical window. Use books, puzzles, and building toys to make STEM a normal part of life. Provide "tinker hours" where they can explore free sites like Code.org or Khan Academy without the pressure of a grade.

Note: Research shows adults often explain how things work to boys more than girls. Make a conscious effort to have technical conversations with all your children.

CREATE "MASTERY EXPERIENCES"

We like what we are good at. To build interest, start with simple projects they can finish successfully. These small wins build the self-efficacy (the "I can do this" feeling) needed to tackle harder problems later.

4

GET HANDS-ON

Give kids chances to use tools and build physical projects. Instead of throwing out a broken remote or old toaster, let them take it apart to see the circuits inside. This builds spatial skills and comfort with how technology actually works.

EXPLORE TECHNOLOGY TOGETHER

You don't have to be an expert to be a great mentor. Explore instructional websites and videos together and ask: "I wonder how they designed that?" Showing that you are curious—and that you aren't afraid of not knowing the answer—models a healthy scientific attitude.

6

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CONNECT STEM TO THEIR VALUES

Show kids that computer scientists and engineers solve real-world problems. If your child values helping others, show them how code can build apps for hospitals or how engineering can protect the environment. This "communal" framing is especially effective for children who have been raised to value collaboration.

SEEK OUT CLASSES AND CLUBS

Help your child find a community. Encourage them to take computer science or technology electives, and check out local clubs like robotics teams or coding circles. Doing these activities with friends helps kids feel that they belong in STEM. Sign up now to join the Aspirations in Computing Community in 9th grade.

8

MODEL PERSEVERANCE

When you face a technical problem (like a phone glitch), stay calm. Say: "I'm frustrated, but I'm going to try one more thing." Kids copy how you handle challenges. Show them that "troubleshooting" is a skill, and struggle is not a sign that they aren't "naturally" good at it.

INTRODUCE RELATABLE ROLE MODELS

Children benefit from seeing people they admire in the field. Look for mentors or stories of professionals who have varied interests like sports, art, or music. This helps kids see that they don't have to change who they are to be "STEM people." Check out the [AIC Stories](https://aspirations.org/aic-stories-ambassadors) series (aspirations.org/aic-stories-ambassadors).

10

9