

12 Key Ideas for Working with Families

from Family ASTRO

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1. Be flexible, and always have an alternative activity or approach in mind. Be prepared with something for families to do who finish early.
2. Make it all fun, not just educational. Show them you're enjoying it too.
3. Be inclusive. Prepare for children and adults of many ages and skill levels. Make sure that everyone has a role that feels important to him or her, and opportunities for success throughout the event.
4. When introducing activities, try to give people a "hook": a problem or puzzle to solve, or some skill to learn. (For example: "We will get to know the night sky to figure out if the Big Dipper is always visible; or to impress your friends when you go camping.")
5. When doing an activity, get quickly to what there is TO DO; save any detailed background information for after you have them hooked.
6. Materials must be ready to go. While students in a class may be used to waiting while you set up, families will be less patient.
7. Throughout the event, allow for as much active participation as you can.
8. Set up the room so that family members sit together. Or, try seating two families at one table so that the groups can share their results.
9. It's best to explain by doing; demonstrate what you want families to do as you explain it. If you want them to build something, build one first and then give them materials to build their own.
10. Try to have two people helping with each family event, so that the person in charge of a particular activity can remain focused on the group and not just on the demands of a few individuals.
11. After each activity, be sure to provide closure. Review what just happened and allow families to share their experience with the activity.
12. Provide food whenever you can (even snacks make a big difference).