

Fostering Positive Views about STEM



Messages are all around us about who is good at or belongs in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). These messages can start affecting children from a young age. If children only see images of certain people and groups in STEM-related fields, they may begin to question whether STEM is for them.

STEM is for everyone! One of the ways to foster children's positive ideas and beliefs about STEM is through books. Here are five steps you can take to use books to share positive messages about STEM with your child.

1. Think about activities your child enjoys that include STEM. For instance, does your child enjoy learning about construction equipment, building with objects or blocks, role-playing as a veterinarian, cooking, or going on nature walks? All of these activities involve STEM. Look for books that reflect your child's experiences, background, and aspects of who they are. Explore books available from your local library, resale stores, community or nonprofit programs (like Raising a Reader), and friends and family members.
2. Preview a book, and consider the messages it sends about STEM and the people who use STEM in their everyday lives. Does the book portray people who share your child's interests, background, and experiences? Does it show a variety of people and groups engaged in STEM-related activities?
3. Find time to read the books you select with your child. Ask questions, and share your thoughts about the book and its messages about STEM. You and your child can explore questions like
 - › What do you like about [character]?
 - › What things does [character] do for their work or play?
 - › What skills does [character] need to do this work or play? How do you think they learned these skills?
 - › What things about [character] are like you? What things are different?
4. Consider sharing the book with your child's teacher, other family members, and friends. Be sure to share what you and your child thought about it.
5. Ask your child's teacher how they find and select books for their classroom or program. This can help you understand the purpose and goals of the setting's library and your ability to contribute to it so that it positively reflects your child and your family.