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# Tips to encourage kids into math- and science-related careers

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(ARA) - Some typical answers to the question "What do you want to be when you grow up?" are: firefighter, princess or an athlete.

But when it comes to dream jobs, an overwhelming 85 percent of kids say they are not interested in a future engineering career -- a profession critical to the infrastructure of the country. That's according to a survey by Harris Interactive commissioned by American Society for Quality, a global membership organization of quality professionals in all industries and fields including engineering.

Two key reasons that kids are saying 'no' to engineering is that they don't feel confident enough in their math and science skills to be good at it and they believe that it's not an exciting career choice.

Speaking to the National Academy of Sciences in April, President Barack Obama announced "a renewed commitment to education in mathematics and science," fulfilling a campaign promise to train 100,000 scientists and engineers during his presidency. Math and science are subjects that provide critical problem solving and thinking skills crucial not only to engineering, but to the 21st century workforce in general.

How are parents influencing their kids? The findings show that although parents believe math and science will help their children be successful, only 20 percent have encouraged their kids to explore engineering as a career option. In fact, girls say their parents are more likely to encourage them to become an actress than an engineer.

Maurice Ghysels, chair of ASQ's K-12 Education Advisory Committee, says that lessons about the value of math and science should start early and continue as students reach high school. "Encouraging exploration and curiosity is vital to budding engineers. Parents can help younger kids build a bridge using toothpicks and let their teens tear apart and rebuild that old toaster," states Ghysels.

A useful tool for parents and students is ASQ's free Real World of Engineering Webinar [www.asq.org/education](http://www.asq.org/education) where you can hear engineers' career stories, and get an idea of the exciting aspects of engineering such as designing bridges and cell phones to inventing medical breakthroughs that save lives.

Some of ASQ's nearly 14,000 engineer members offer these tips on how parents can help to build a love of math and science with their kids:

\* Take children on a tour of local manufacturing companies where they can see first-hand how fun toys and products with which they're familiar -- like bicycles, candy and baseballs -- are made. Learn the role an engineer plays in getting the product from the idea stage to store shelves. Suggestions: Jelly Belly Factory tour ([www.jellybelly.com](http://www.jellybelly.com)) and the Louisville Slugger Museum Factory tour ([www.sluggermuseum.com](http://www.sluggermuseum.com)).

\* Research vacation spots for geology, technology and science-related attractions and explore manufactured products specific to the area, so you can teach your kids in a fun setting. Suggestions: National Air and Space Museum ([www.nasm.si.edu](http://www.nasm.si.edu)); Computer History Museum ([www.computerhistory.org](http://www.computerhistory.org)) and the Harley Davidson Museum ([www.harley-davidson.com/museum](http://www.harley-davidson.com/museum)).



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- \* Encourage curiosity in younger children with building blocks, puzzles and Legos. Challenge older children with remote control vehicles, robots, or work together to build a tree house.
- \* Take them to a FIRST Robotics Competition ([www.usfirst.org](http://www.usfirst.org)) or get them involved with National Science Olympiad competitions ([www.soinc.org](http://www.soinc.org)).
- \* Get older kids a subscription to magazines such as Fast Company which profiles young entrepreneurs using their tech knowledge or Scientific American, which unique insights about developments in science and technology.
- \* Seek out coworkers, family and friends who are engineers, and let them share stories with your children about what they do. Have your engineer friends speak at PTA meetings and school career fairs.

One of the simplest and most important things that parents can do is maintain a positive attitude about math and science, encourage curiosity and keep an open mind as your child explores potential careers.

Courtesy of ARAcotent

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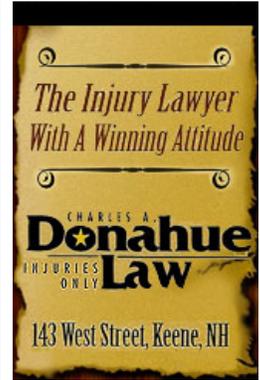
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