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Math and Science are Kids' Favorite Subjects, But Parents Value Reading and Writing Skills More, According to New Study

Nationwide survey finds emphasizing real-life applications of science in particular could change parent perceptions and help kids learn

NEW YORK – April 18, 2017 – Though more than half of parents with school-aged children say math or science is their child's favorite subject, they more readily understand how reading and writing skills impact future success, according to a [new study](#) released today by [Science Everywhere](#), an initiative by the [Overdeck Family Foundation](#) and the [Simons Foundation](#) to catalyze outside-school math and science learning. Science in particular is viewed differently than the other three subjects: More than 80 percent of parents believe having a strong background in reading, writing, and math is "very important" in order to get a good job, but just 59 percent say the same for science.

"Parents' understanding of science and its value is so important in helping kids also understand and love science," said **Marilyn Simons, president of the Simons Foundation**. "By doing and experiencing science firsthand, children will gain skills that will be valuable throughout life."

[The data](#) indicate that misperceptions of what science is impact parent sentiment. The study found that 45 percent of parents believe science skills are only necessary for careers in science and that most Americans don't have much need for them. Relatedly, only 56 percent of parents said they use science skills on at least a daily basis, compared with 88 percent for writing and 93 percent for reading.

"Parents can easily show that throwing a football and baking a cake are science in action. Most people don't equate these activities with physics and chemistry, but in fact these examples show kids that science will help them in daily life," said **Laura Overdeck, chair of Overdeck Family Foundation**. "We need to show kids that science is alive and relevant for every student, not just for the future career scientists."

[The study](#) also found that parents tend to grade their children strongly in all academic subjects. At least 75 percent gave their children an "A" or "B" in reading, writing, math, and science. But recent [National Assessment of Educational Progress](#) test results show that only 33% and 32% of U.S. students on average are performing at or above proficient in math and science respectively.

Conversely, parents are less confident in their own skills, particularly when it comes to math and science. Nearly 90 percent of parents gave themselves an “A” or “B” in reading, but just 68 percent said the same for math and 64 percent for science. Only 32 percent gave themselves an “A” in science, while nearly double that number (63 percent) gave themselves an A in reading.

This nationwide survey, conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Science Everywhere, polled just over 2,500 Americans with school-aged children in February/March 2017.

The findings of the study support the need for initiatives like Science Everywhere that encourage kids and parents to explore math and science in fun, hands-on ways outside of class.

Through Science Everywhere, Overdeck Family Foundation and the Simons Foundation are providing nearly half a million dollars to match every donation to qualifying outside-school math and science projects submitted by classroom teachers to DonorsChoose.org. At the end of the challenge, a panel of judges will award five \$5,000 prizes to the teachers who submit the best ideas. The winning teachers will be announced on September 5, 2017.

Teachers interested in participating in the challenge can access more information about submitting projects [here](#). Members of the public interested in supporting a classroom project can visit [this page](#) to find a request that speaks to them.

About Overdeck Family Foundation

Demonstrating a passion and commitment to the future of American education, John and Laura Overdeck established the Overdeck Family Foundation in 2011. The foundation seeks to help all kids achieve their greatest potential by funding compelling, innovative programs and projects that have proven, quantifiable results.

About the Simons Foundation

Established in 1994, the Simons Foundation is a private foundation dedicated to advancing the frontiers of research in mathematics and the basic sciences. Science Sandbox, an initiative of the Simons Foundation, seeks to unlock scientific thinking by engaging people with the process of science.

About DonorsChoose.org

Founded in 2000 by a Bronx history teacher, DonorsChoose.org has raised \$500 million for America's classrooms. Teachers come to DonorsChoose.org to request the materials and experiences they need most for their classrooms, and donors give to the projects that inspire them. To date, nearly 2.5 million people and partners have funded projects on the site, reaching 21.6 million students and making DonorsChoose.org the leading platform for supporting U.S. public schools.

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