

Sciencenter Connections: Curiosity Corner puts focus on youngest set



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Sciencenter Connection

Do you have young children? If so, you may already know that the Sciencenter is the place for curious children to come and explore the science that is all around them every day.

The Sciencenter's Curiosity Corner is a vibrant playspace designed for children ages 4 and under. This special gallery space offers hands-on exhibits and activity stations that are just right for smaller hands, littler bodies and inquisitive young minds.

At 10:30 a.m. every Tuesday, the Sciencenter welcomes toddlers and preschool-aged children, as well as their parents or adult caregiver, to be a part of our special Curiosity Corner programs. Our line-up features a new theme each week, allowing children to explore math, stories, animals, the senses and our world, all while focusing on early science learning and early literacy.

Typically, these weekly programs, which are included with museum admission, introduce a science concept through a storybook and then a related hands-on activity, as is the case this coming Tuesday, when toddlers and preschoolers are invited to hear the story "It's a Good Thing There are Insects" by Allan Fowler and construct their own insect.

As part of the Sciencenter's expanding work in the area of early science learning, we have recently begun work with Cornell University's Early Childhood Cognition Laboratory to help advance our understanding of how young children learn. This partnership creates exciting opportunities for our youngest museum visitors and their parents to be involved in, and benefit from current research in early childhood development.

On most Tuesdays and on most weekends, the Curiosity Corner serves as real-time laboratory space for Cornell researchers to engage and observe young children at play. Participation is completely voluntary, and parents have the opportunity to ask questions of researchers at the cutting edge of the field of early childhood development. For those interested in having their child participate in this exciting research, call the Sciencenter at 272-0600, ext. 21 on Tuesdays or over the weekend to learn the times of our next research sessions.

What is learned through this important research is being put to work right away to advance early learning in our community. The Sciencenter is currently developing and implementing curricula in early science learning for area preschools. Already, we are partnering with the Drop-In Children's Center to deliver hands-on programming to their preschool classes, and to provide professional development for early childhood educators in age-appropriate inquiry-based early science instruction.

Together with parents, researchers and early childhood educators, the Sciencenter is working to create in children a solid foundation on which future learning and science literacy is built.

Lara Litchfield-Kimber is the deputy director of the Sciencenter. Sciencenter Connections appears the second Thursday of the month in Ticket.