Supporting your child in his/her science education includes supporting administrators, teachers, and staff at your child’s school. This can take many shapes and forms – not all parent/guardian support needs to be face to face, yet in building relationships with your child’s teacher, principal, and other school staff members, you will be able to create opportunities to interact with and advocate for invaluable learning experiences.

Teachers today are focused on providing standards-based, engaging, and differentiated instruction for students. Here are some helpful tips for understanding and advocating for science instruction that is recognized for those characteristics.

1. Look for and ask about “hands-on, minds-on” lessons that include opportunities for students to engage in science that develops both science content understandings and thinking skills.
   a. Students use materials and equipment to investigate questions that help them develop scientific understandings based on the state standards. Parents may review the state standards at the Arizona Department of Education website: http://www.azed.gov/standards-practices/
   b. Students read about and write about science. Many teachers use science notebooks with their students as well as having additional informational reading opportunities to allow students to learn in many and varied ways.
   c. Students are challenged to ask questions, plan and design investigations, and create explanations for what they experience in their science lessons.
   d. Students are supported in making connections to real life applications. Learning and applying 21st Century Thinking Skills allow students to demonstrate their understanding of important science concepts.

2. Science instruction provides opportunities for all students to participate in safe, stimulating, engaging, and challenging experiences.
   a. Science is taught regularly throughout the week, with a balance of hands-on lessons, along with reading and writing in science. In addition, math can be taught and reinforced as a tool while doing science.
b. Teachers set high expectations for all students to succeed in their science lessons. Students are supported in their learning through multiple avenues and by setting and reviewing goals on an ongoing basis.

c. Students are encouraged to ask questions and pursue scientific interests both in and out of classrooms.

d. Students are assessed on many levels, including their scientific understanding, their ability to engage in science, and how they communicate and apply their knowledge.

Visit the following websites to learn more about how parents can advocate for an effective science education for their children.

TUSD Science Department


Science Matters: National Science Teachers Association

http://www.nsta.org/sciencematters/

Arizona Department of Education

http://www.azed.gov/

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills


Science Notebooks