Volunteers Needed!

Get involved with SCIENCouters
An After School Science Club at the Boys and Girls Clubs

Explore science with youth from the Taft and Allied Boys & Girls Club. Sessions are Mondays and Tuesdays 4:20-6:00 PM starting 9-10-12. Transportation is provided.

For information contact the Institute for Chemical Education
ice@chem.wisc.edu

Sponsored by:
ICE
UW-NSEC
Boys & Girls Clubs of Dane County
SCIENCountErs Mentor Expectations:

One of the ways SCIENCountErs promotes scientific learning in the children is by building relationships between the children and the mentors. Part of your job as a mentor is to guide the children through the activity but the main focus of your job is to establish a meaningful relationship with the children, thus becoming scientific role models for them.

You will become a co-investigator throughout the activity and explore the science behind it with the children so that they don't feel that they are being taught but rather feel that they are making discoveries with their role model. This provides the basis for forming relationships, which motivates the children to start thinking of science as something fun and not just as another class in school.

Before you can start to engage the children it is important to know what is expected of you during the sessions:

1. Make sure you know the children you will be working with:

The children who participate in the B&GC are, for the most part, regarded as “at-risk” and “high-need.” They are at greater risk than other children for dropping out of school, teen pregnancy, involvement with drugs, and other social problems. Their lives can be chaotic and stressful, especially if their families struggle with poverty or dysfunctionality. These children may not do particularly well in school and, in many cases, may have limited confidence in their academic abilities due to lack of encouragement.

To be a good mentor is really important to have an open attitude that allows you to see the young people you meet as individuals who have aspirations and challenges, and who deserve support to achieve their potential. Also be aware that more than half of the B&GC members are from minority families, so as a mentor, it is important to be sensitive to cultural diversity while at the same time refraining from stereotyping. Do not assume that a child celebrates certain holidays (Christmas, Easter, Halloween, or even his/her own birthday). Also, do not assume the make-up of a child’s “family” (size, race, gender, etc.) Practice the correct pronunciation of children’s names if they are initially unfamiliar to you.

2. Focus on building a relationship:

The activities you and the children do together provide a focus for your interactions and are a natural starting point for the relationship building. It takes time and consistency on your part to build familiarity and trust between you and the children, so don’t expect to be close right away. Although you are the adult in the situation and, as such, “in charge,” your role is not one of parent or teacher here, but rather a guide or advisor.
To help you build a good relationship you can:

- **Ask open-ended questions.** Questions that seek more information and require more than a one-word answer help to show that you are interested in your mentees and what they think. At the same time, not all children will be willing to open up to you immediately. Use your judgment to keep the conversation relaxed and don't be afraid of silence.

- **Practice active listening.** Demonstrate through your body language and your verbal responses that you are actually taking in what someone is telling you.

- **Show empathy.** Acknowledging how a person feels is validating to them. Phrases such as, “I can see how that must have been frustrating for you” tell the mentees that you accept and understand how they are feeling.

- **Be a supportive partner and guide.** Together you and your mentees will have weekly opportunities to do fun and interesting science investigations. Concentrate on partnering with them, on giving them choice over what you will be doing, and on being positive and supportive role model.

### Children interaction Tips:

Highlighted in this section are a couple of tips to help the student mentors interact with the children during the first session of the program:

- **Keep directions to a minimum.** Learn how to proceed through a lesson by asking the kids questions about how to do things. If you do too much talking in the beginning, you lose them, fast. Let them ask questions once they are knee deep in an activity and work with them so they can figure out the answer on their own.

- **Challenge by Choice.** Don’t force them to do anything they don’t want to do. Ask that they find some way to participate in a way they feel comfortable but allow them to make their own decisions and be a part of things on their own time.

- **Keep it simple, make it fun.** Children are more engaged if they are having fun so make this a top priority. Remember, they had school a couple of hours ago, if they start to feel like the activity is just like another lesson in school they won’t be engaged.

- **Every lesson should have a beginning, middle, and an end.** Always ask kids what they have learned from your lesson. Students should be
well aware of the context in which a lesson is being taught.

• **Try to keep the messiness to a minimum.** Depending on the activity you may need to get newspapers or some other covering to keep from staining tables or other parts of the room.

• **Remember to have fun yourself.** If the kids see that their coordinator or mentor is not enjoying themselves, they won’t be excited about the activity as well. Make sure you emanate excitement for science at all times.