



803/F

Creating an environment to learn science with parents: Family Science

S Karunaratne, R P Kalupahanage, and D M S C P K Dehideniya*

Postgraduate Institute of Science, University of Peradeniya

The influence of parents provides many benefits for their child's learning. Family Science (FS) is an education programme which provides opportunities especially for disadvantaged children and their parents to learn science by means of hands-on science activities. FS programmes are done in many countries. The present study aimed to build an interest in science among third graders in a rural school in the Kandy district of the Central Province in Sri Lanka and their parents.

Hands-on science activities with cooperative learning adopted from the FS model in the USA were developed and used in ten sessions of 2-hour duration, conducted after school. The themes used were water, air, light, living and non-living, human body, temperature and electricity. Twenty three children followed the programme with their parents and worked in five groups. Child-parent pairs were in the same group only for some sessions.

In a session participants did 4-6 hands-on science activities. They were provided with the materials needed. From the second session 5-10 minutes were given at the beginning to share what they had done with others at home and to bring what they did at home to sessions. This provided a platform to do "science talk." These science talks motivated them for further science learning. Appreciation and the acceptance for their work by the researchers and others motivated them to do activities, which provided opportunities for adults and children to be partners in their science learning. Although the parents did not ask questions at the beginning, they began to do so during later sessions.

Analysis of the evaluation sheets, observations of student and parent behaviours and interviews revealed that they enjoyed learning science. The FS programme helped the children and their parents to build up a knowledge of science to explain phenomena in everyday life and applications of some science concepts that will lead to a better tomorrow.

Acknowledgements: Financial assistance by National Science Foundation.