

IF YOUR children are like most, they think that "science" is a class in school, and that the most important thing is whether or not the teacher is in a good mood. This is a pretty common reaction. It's understandable. The world of children is small.

Science, however, is a lot more than what happens to a child in science class. It's also more than all the discoveries of science put together.

Science is *a way of knowing*. The word itself means "knowing" in Latin. Is this all Greek to you? It shouldn't be. The Greek word for "knowing" is "mathematics." Math and science have a lot in common, and mathematics is sometimes called "the handmaiden of science."

What is this special way of knowing?

First, science takes a particular view of the world. Most of all, the world according to science is *understandable*. Scientists also believe that their ideas can and should change, but that, at the same time, careful study will produce lasting knowledge. The search for lasting knowledge leads science to grow in its understanding of the world.

Second, the methods of science put the belief that the world is understandable into action. Scientists work with evidence, logic, and imagination to *explain and predict* events in the real world.

The World According to Science: Think About It



That's where math comes in. Math is both the language of logic and an important tool for collecting and dealing with evidence.

In short, the "scientific method" is not bloodless, mechanical, or boring. It's a complicated business of looking beneath the surface of things. It entails a lot of pain and heartache for scientists, but it is very exciting.

Like our children, we need to understand that science is more than a class in school. It's a special set of beliefs and tools and habits of mind for considering the real world. Science can be useful whenever we need to look beneath the surface of things. Good science teachers understand these points. With a little help from us, our children will begin to understand that what happens in school is only part of the picture. In fact, we understand more about families, businesses, farms, and schools because these parts of life have been studied scientifically.

For more information, call the ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools (ERIC/CRESS) toll-free at 1-800/624-9120. We can help direct you to other resources. To find out more about the ERIC system and its varied units and services, call ACCESS ERIC at 1-800/USE-ERIC. Staff of ERIC/CRESS prepared this article, based on information in the ERIC database.