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PARENTAL SUPPORT TO LEARN SCIENCE: FAMILY SCIENCE**S. Karunaratne¹, R. P. Kalupahanage², D. M. S. C. P. K. Dehideniya²**¹*Science Education Unit, Faculty of Science, University of Peradeniya*²*Postgraduate Institute of Science, University of Peradeniya*

Many research studies show the positive impact of parents in their child's learning. Family Science (FS) is an education programme for disadvantaged children and their parents to learn science by means of hands-on science activities. Family Science programmes are distributed in countries including the United States of America (USA), Australia, Costa Rica, Sweden and many other countries. In this study, the Family Science programme was specifically aimed to build interest in science among grade three students and their parents in a rural school in the Kandy district of the Central Province in Sri Lanka.

The model used by the Family Science programmes in the USA was used in developing and conducting interesting hands-on science activities with cooperative learning. The themes used in developing the activities were water, air, light, living and non-living, human body, temperature and electricity. The programme consisted of ten sessions of 2-hours duration and was conducted after school. Before the sessions started, each parent was given a lunch packet to share with the child. Twenty three children followed the programme with their parents. The participating parents were either the mother or the grandmother except for one father and one grandfather. They worked in five groups. The parent and the child worked in the same group on some days, and in different groups on other days. In a session they did about 4-6 hands-on science activities. For example in the first session, there were six activities, namely, hanging water, floating egg, mixing colours, Newton's disk, balloon rocket and mixing oil and water. They were provided with materials needed for the activities. From the second session 5-10 minutes were given at the beginning to make presentations on what they had done at home related to what they had learnt in the previous session.

Student presentations revealed that they shared what they had learnt with others at home. Parents helped the children in supplying items for the activities by cutting, pasting, dissolving and in reporting the results orally and in making charts. Analysis of the evaluation sheets, observations of student and parent behaviours with happy faces and interviews revealed that they enjoyed learning science. The activities provided opportunities for adults and children to be partners in their science learning.

This FS programme helped the children and their parents to build up knowledge of science to explain phenomena in everyday life and applications of some science concepts that would lead to a better tomorrow.

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