

TIPS FROM TEACHERS

It's beneficial to hear the perspective of those who've been through the process. We asked veteran Battle of the Brains educators for a few general tips.

KEEP TEAM SIZE REASONABLE

Smaller groups — fewer than 20 students — are easier to manage. Assigning a student project manager to handle the timeline and deadlines means less teacher nagging.

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

Assign students to work on specific project elements based on interest and aptitude. You can even ask students to fill out job applications listing strengths and skills they can add to the team.

TAKE INSPIRATION FROM EVERYDAY LIFE

Encourage kids to be curious about the world around them when determining the big idea. If it's something that applies to their everyday life, chances are it's relevant to a lot of other students, too.

GET OUT THERE AND SEE HOW OTHER CENTERS DO IT

Visit science center websites and encourage students to research what exhibits are offered and what makes them appealing.

CONSIDER VISUAL LEARNERS

Create a place in your room where kids can jot down ideas as they come. A whiteboard, a chalkboard or a big flip chart can work wonders to keep the ideas present.

STICK WITH A TOPIC STUDENTS ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT

They'll be spending a lot of time with their big idea so it helps if they have a real passion for it. That natural interest will keep them going throughout the process.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR MENTORS

Feedback from an engineer, architect or construction professional can make a difference. Their input can also help keep you focused on STEM concepts.

PUT STUDENTS IN CHARGE OF CRITICAL THINKING

Instead of shooting down (occasionally unrealistic) ideas yourself, encourage students to think critically about what's best for the project. It's valuable for kids to understand the need to support someone else's vision to benefit the team.

BE ACCOUNTABLE TO YOURSELVES

Set progress deadlines along the way and stick to them, including a final deadline that's a few days before the actual submission date to accommodate last-minute issues. When a team is rushed at the end, it shows.