Safety Precautions for the Elementary Classroom
From Elser, W.K. & Esler, M.K. 1993

1. Avoid using chemicals that are hazardous to children. Examples of safe chemicals—vinegar and baking soda, Alka-Seltzer and water, a rusty nail, vinegar and limestone etc.

2. Use plastic laboratory vessels, beakers, graduated cylinders, tubing and so forth. Use glass only when necessary such as when applying heat.

3. Use only dry cells and flashlight-type batteries when studying electricity. Avoid using alkaline batteries as they generate a large current that causes connecting wires to heat. NEVER permit children to work with electricity that is plugged into a wall outlet.

4. Check student health records. Note which of your students are subject to allergic reactions and the nature of their allergies. Note any children who have childhood diabetes or other conditions that might be affected by science activities.

5. Have a first aid kit available.

6. Be sure the children are seated a safe distance away from any demonstration lesson.

7. Do not store science equipment and materials on open surfaces where children may have unsupervised access.

8. Never permit children to use propane or Bunsen burners. Use hot plates, candles or alcohol burners as heat sources.

9. Have children tie back long hair and loose clothing when working near an open flame.

10. Caution children not to taste any materials or put any materials or objects in the mouth, nose or ears. Also don’t rub around the face while handling any type of foreign substance.
11. Caution children about potential safety hazards prior to starting an activity. You might want to appoint a safety monitor for each group of students.

12. Advise students to report all accidents or injuries as soon as possible, no matter how minor.

13. Obtain a copy of safety codes available for your school or system. Check the room for potential hazards.

14. Do not permit children to transport science materials down a hallway when other students are around.

15. Animals in the classroom are a potential safety problem. Allow pets to remain in the room for only a short time.