

Summer at the STEM Lab Through the Eyes of an Intern

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If you think it's quiet in the summer at UNH Manchester, think again. This summer I was able to join the amazing STEM Discovery Lab team as the intern for their summer programming, and it was bustling. From July to August, the STEM Discovery Lab

hosted a variety of programs for several different groups in collaborations with community partners.

Thanks to generous funding from the Granite United Way, the STEM Discovery Lab offered six STEM enrichment sessions with the YMCA Power Scholars program, which encourages middle school students to engage in mathematics, literacy, and enrichment activities throughout the summer. In the first two weeks, groups participated in either Stream Safari or VEX Robotics. During Stream Safari, which focuses on stream health and ecology, the students broke into small groups to collect and identify macroinvertebrates and performed various tests on the water, such as pH and nitrogen content tests. In VEX Robotics, the Power Scholars learned about programming robots to perform specific tasks, which got progressively more complex.



The third week, the Power Scholars participated in Harnessing the Wind. They did a variety of activities such as building planes out of Styrofoam plates, making CD hovercrafts, and creating and testing miniature wind turbine blades. Finally, the Power Scholars took on Cooking with Chemistry, where they learned about chemistry through activities using food. They tested the pH of different food items, learned about stereo isomers with lemons and oranges, and created their own Boba, a jelly that is typically found in small spheres in tea.

There were also a few camps for elementary school students in partnership with the YMCA and 21st Century Community Learning Centers. In Electricity and Circuits, youth made conductive playdough, learned how to make an LED light glow with copper tape and a battery, and did several static electricity activities. During Chemistry of Color, they learned about chemistry through hands-on experiments. They worked in teams to create a “rainbow reaction,” observed egg osmosis, and made ice cream with ice and salt, which was a favorite.

For the sixteenth year, middle and high school English learners attended the month long EXCELL-in-STEM program. Not only did these students take part in Stream Safari and VEX robotics, they also got to 3D print, learn about coding, and conduct investigations in UNH Manchester’s biology labs.

As the intern for these programs, I had a wide variety of responsibilities. Prior to the start of the programs, I met with my incredible advisors and the awesome program instructors. These meetings helped to plan the stream locations, discuss supply needs

and activities, and assist with room set-up. During the Stream Safari programs, I assisted with gathering and transporting supplies, as well as overseeing the safety of the students. Throughout all of the programs, I was responsible for gathering supplies, organizing and collecting student data, assisting with activities, providing snacks, taking attendance, and collaborating with volunteers and supervisors.



It was so rewarding to see the students get to enjoy these unique STEM activities. The students were engaged and focused, while also having a lot of fun. Some of the students told me how they enjoyed the programs because the activities weren't ones they got to do at home. This kind of feedback exemplifies why programs like this are so important. These students are the future of STEM, and the STEM Lab is showing them all of the opportunities that can come of STEM education. I couldn't be prouder of what the programs accomplished this summer, and it was truly an honor to be a part of it.



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