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Melissa Vanek, STARBASE Connecticut East Hartford

August 10, 2013

Sixty [East Hartford](#) ^[1] sixth grade students enjoyed week-long STEM camps at STARBASE Connecticut during the month of July. The campers, recent graduates of the federally funded 25 hour STEM program called STARBASE, took advantage of the free program and went back to STARBASE for more science education.

Activities ranged from using microscopes to study cheek cells to protecting an egg during a launch from the roof. One of the favorite activities of the summer involved learning how to program robots to complete challenges from the FIRST [Lego](#) ^[2] League competition board. "The robots provide a challenge in which the students not only learn how to program, but also learn other life skills; such as team work, patience and problem solving," said STARBASE Connecticut Director, Melissa "Raven" Vanek. Through the generosity of Steve Socolosky, a technology education teacher at EH High School, and the East Hartford Schools Business Partnership, Inc., one week of STARBASE students were able to get up in the air and fly a Cessna 172 plane. "I can't believe I flew a plane! I really flew it!" said Nathaniel Ringrose, one STARBASE camper.

Other summer activities focused the students by using the Engineering Design Process and scientific method. "The EDP and scientific method provide a foundation of thinking which helps the students explore how to solve problems. This fosters creative thinking and a thought process that will help them in their future careers and throughout all aspects of their life," explained STARBASE teacher, Liz "Dory" Pollard.

Between finding macro-invertebrates in the stream to determine the biotic index to using GPS devices to locate "treasure," the students were engaged in learning and fun each week. It was not just the students who were sad to see the program end each week. The parents wanted to know how the students can stay involved with the program, the teachers and the STEM education they bring.

While the week-long summer sessions provide the "next step" for the STARBASE graduates who enjoyed the school-year STARBASE program in fifth grade, there are many ways for the students to continue their STEM learning with STARBASE. There are many after-school offerings at a number of the East Hartford schools and a new initiative will see STARBASE staff working with O'Connell school in the mornings.

If you have any questions about the program or are wondering how to get involved, contact STARBASE Connecticut Director, Melissa Vanek, at mvaneke@starbase-ct.com [3] or like STARBASE Connecticut on Facebook.

Posted August 2013.

For the original artical, please click [here](#) [4].

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[2] <http://www.courant.com/topic/economy-business-finance/lego-group-HOC587.topic>

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