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## Sixth Graders Spark Science Interest

**WINCHESTER, Va.** – “Three, two, one, blastoff!” yelled sixth graders from Randolph-Macon Academy (R-MA), as they cheered on their classmates Friday afternoon.

Smiles, cheering, gasps of relief and excitement were all apparent on the students' faces, which is enough evidence for some that if you want kids to take an interest in science and math, have them build and launch their own rockets.

Rocket building is just one of many lessons offered by the Winchester STARBASE Academy, an institution that focuses on getting fifth graders and middle school aged students interested in STEM - or science, technology, engineering and math.

"We are re-enforcing what the teacher is already teaching in the classroom," explained Susan Corrigan, the program director of the Winchester STARBASE Academy. "We are taking their content and providing a variety of exciting, hands-on, inquiry-based lessons for the students, so that they are excited about the science and technology career fields."

A student who participated in the program was able to enthusiastically rattle off a number of lessons learned.

"We built rockets, we controlled a robot, we used circuits and we did this thing with grams to see how much a boat could hold," said Jotrina Vanboi, a sixth grader at R-MA.

STARBASE Academies are located around the country [1] and federally funded by the Department of Defense.

The cost for the DOD to put a child through the week-long program is about \$350, but the life long lessons are considered priceless to many.

"It's a really good education program," said R-MA sixth grader, Michael Ferguson. "You remember the learning, but you're also having fun."

While the academy is designed for fifth graders at Title I or "at-risk" schools, the Winchester STARBASE Academy does their best to accommodate sixth and seventh graders, and private schools like R-MA.

"STARBASE is a good place and I hope my school can bring seventh graders here too," Vanboi said.

Winchester STARBASE Academy said they are able to teach about 800 students a year. There is also a STARBASE Academy in Martinsburg, W.Va.

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