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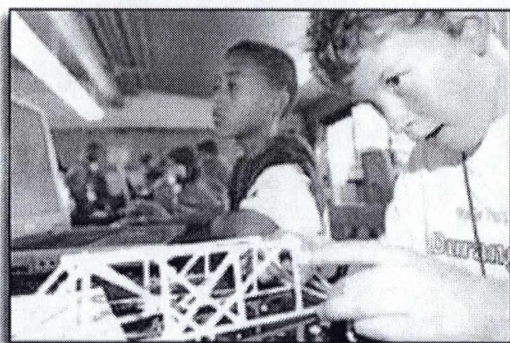
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FLC camp builds kids' science dreams

By Mary Ann Lopez

Herald Staff Writer



YODIT GIDEY / Herald

Elizabeth Schell, 11, right, of Escalante Middle School builds the bridge her teammate Ian Campbell, 12, of Cortez Middle School designed on Tuesday at Fort Lewis College. Weight will be applied to the bridges to determine their breaking point.

Participation, or Co-Amp, engineering and science camp. The camp allows middle school students to be exposed to a college campus while learning about science, engineering and math.

Through activities such as building miniature bridges and race cars, students engage in fun learning experiences while getting hands-on experience in science and technology.

"I'm here because I'm interested in science, and to a great extent I'm interested in computers," Ian said. "I am learning lots of science things."

Wednesday, students were participating in a SimCity activity, using a computer-simulation game. Students were building cities, adding infrastructure such as bridges and power plants, while staying within budget.

Ian said the program is one of the activities he enjoyed. He is biased

Computers fascinate Ian Campbell. The 12-year-old Cortez Middle School student knows exactly what he wants to be when he grows up: a computer animator working for DreamWorks SKG.

Ian believes his dream job is within his reach. A summer camp he is attending up at Fort Lewis College may encourage him.

Thirty-two students from around the Four Corners region are participating in the Colorado Alliance for Minority

because he enjoys doing almost anything on a computer.

Omnia El-Hakim, a professor of civil engineering at the college, founded the summer school program because she saw a need for under-represented groups to pursue careers in science and engineering. She noticed few women and minorities in her classes. El-Hakim is the camp's program director.

Though the camp is geared toward minority and female students, it is open to any interested student, El-Hakim said.

"I felt we are lacking women and underrepresented, diverse groups," she said. "We are giving them the idea that engineering, science and math can be fun."

Encouraging young students who have an interest in science and engineering will help fuel their curiosity, she said.

The alliance is a statewide consortium found on 14 college campuses around Colorado and the Four Corners. The National Science Foundation sponsors the program to try to attract and prepare students for careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The campers spend two weeks on campus, staying in dormitories. Student mentors who are studying science and engineering help the youngsters during the program.

Camp participants study a curriculum that some of the college's science and engineering faculty help design, El-Hakim said. Along with engineering, the students learn about geology, biology, chemistry, and math.

One of the camp's highlights is having the students split into teams to complete research projects, El-Hakim said. They learn teamwork, leadership and communication skills. The students will research a design topic and give a presentation before the other students, teachers and families.

For 12-year-old Ian, one of the best parts of the program is spending time with mentors. "They did it, and I can do it, too," he said.

For Lydia Herbert, 11 and from Teec Nos Pos, Ariz., the camp is just fun. Lydia, who will be a seventh-grader in the fall, said this was her first time on a college campus. Learning how to build a bridge and learning about the stars were a few of the highlights, she said. "I want to be an engineer," she said. "Because it's a lot of fun; it's fun building stuff."

Seth Roubideaux, a Bayfield 12-year-old, is following in the footsteps of his mother. Fifteen years ago, his mother, Mikki Roubideaux, participated in the

program. Seth, a sixth-grader at St. Columba, said the experience at the Fort has been good.

"I like chemistry, and I wanted to see what it was like to be in college and meet new friends," he said. In the fall, he hopes to go back to school already knowing some answers to his school work.

Ian said the program has been fun and educational. "I believe that this will get me ready for my college experience when I grow up."

Reach Staff Writer Mary Ann Lopez [here](#) .

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