



Photos by Layla Garms
Researcher Mingxia Liu demonstrates a technique in the molecular pathology lab for Sabrina Sims (foreground) and fellow SciTech participants.

CAMP IMMERSSES STUDENTS IN SCIENCE

BY LAYLA GARMS
THE CHRONICLE

Twelve year-old Akshat Dixit dreams of becoming an engineer or computer scientist.

Akshat, a rising eighth grader at Hanes Middle School, and nearly 100 of his peers are getting a closer look at those and other STEM (science, engineering, technology, math) careers this summer through the SciTech Camp.

"This is my first time (at the camp). It's been really fun," said Akshat. "We've been to a lot of exciting places like SciWorks, and we got to work with lots of robotics and lots of chemistry and math. I've made a lot of friends, too."

Born of a partnership between Winston-Salem State University and Wake Forest University's Innovation Quarter (formerly Piedmont Triad Research Park), SciTech has grown fourfold from its initial attendance of 25 students in 2006. The camp is designed to expose students in sixth through 10th grades to the many high-tech careers Winston-Salem has to offer, explained Dr. Denise Johnson, associate professor of education at WSSU and director of the program.

"We really want kids to know that there's a place for them in the Winston-Salem economy and that their math and science skills will be used in their careers," said the Lexington native.

The week-long program, which ran June 24-28, is supported by sponsors and offered to students for a nominal fee of \$10, Johnson said. One of the camp's chief objectives is to reach underrepresented youth who might not traditionally have access to summer enrichment programs, she explained. Camp leaders worked closely with Big Brothers/Big Sisters and the Housing Authority to identify potential participants, in addition to advertising the program to the broader community. The result was a group of campers from a broad cross-section of the socioeconomic spectrum.

Caleb Pledger, a rising eighth grader at Summit School, hopes to become a doctor or dentist someday. Caleb, the third of four children and a member of the math club at his school, described SciTech as "wonderful."

"I'm really into math, so it's teaching me more algebraic equations and variables," he said.



SciTech participants Maya Grimes (left) and Kayla Sandiford.



Caleb Pledger



Akshat Dixit

The students visited the IQ (Innovation Quarter) last week, where they learned about molecular pathology (which focuses on the study and diagnosis of disease through the examination of molecules within organs, tissues or bodily fluids) and heard from IQ President Dr. Eric Tomlinson. Over the course of the week, they designed rockets and wind turbines, participated in lab experiments, and honed their math and science skills. K a y l a Sandiford said she enjoyed the active approach the camp curriculum took to learning.



Johnson



Garcia

"It's been good," said the Paisley IB Magnet School student. "They don't make you sit through lectures. It's all very hands-on." The students took field trips to SciWorks, Out of Our Minds animation studio in Winston-Salem, NC State University, the Downtown Health Plaza, Guilford Technical Community College and Duke Energy's Belews Creek Stream Station.

"I hope that they'll appreciate science and enjoy it more," said WSSU alumnus Bobby Garcia, the science coordinator for the camp. "Hopefully, they'll see that science is really fun and it's a part of everything."

The SciWorks trip was a highlight for Maya Grimes, 13.



Jarel Henry

"I like that they made math and science fun and not boring," said Maya, a student at Southeast Middle School and aspiring dentist who is in her second year with the camp. "...I think every year it gets better because you do different things and you learn new things."

Thirteen year-old Jarel Henry heard about SciTech from his older brother, Devin, who attended a couple of years ago, and said he was eager to experience it for himself. Jarel, who hopes to become an entrepreneur someday, said the camp did not disappoint.

"It's been more than my expectations. I've learned many things. I learned how to graph and how to work through slope and the field trips are very fun also," said Jarel, a two sport athlete. "I would recommend it to other kids. If you want to have fun and meet new people and learn new things, you should come."

SciTech will host camps over Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools' fall and spring breaks during the 2013-14 school year. For more information, contact Johnson at 336-750-2708 or johnsondt@wssu.edu.

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