



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: *Thursday, February 4, 2010*

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Pilot Knob students learn science hands-on with Engineers in Residence

(Mendota Heights, Minn.) --- Pilot Knob Elementary School in Independent School District 197 hosted three Engineers in Residence from the Science Museum of Minnesota last week to demonstrate real-world applications of engineering. Each classroom had three sessions throughout the week with one of the Engineers during which they participated in hands-on scientific experiments.



Second grader Maya Sims works with Engineer in Residence Aaron Pierson

This was the first time that Pilot Knob had the opportunity to participate in the Engineers in Residence program. A group of teachers contacted the Science Museum, and the Parent-Teacher Association funded the experience. The goal of the residencies is to give students up-close time with professional educators who can spark their interest in science.

The Engineers in Residence had different lessons and experiments appropriate for each grade level. Each was set up to demonstrate the basic function of engineers: to develop a design to solve a problem. Most of the classrooms worked as environmental engineers, working on problems ranging from water filtering to pollination.

Mrs. Wilson's second grade class spent their last session with the Engineer in Residence designing an instrument to collect pollen from a flower. The students chose from straws, string, Popsicle sticks, pipe cleaners, erasers, tape, and various other materials to create a tool to collect baking soda from a tube, representing the pollen in a flower. "It was really interesting," said Wilson. "Kids love hands-on activities and working in teams to solve problems."

This experience gave Pilot Knob students an opportunity to be exposed to science and engineering in a new and exciting way. "Young students love to build, design, and problem solve," said Principal Tom Benson. "This is a great experience for them because in the future there will be a need for engineers and scientists, and they can see now that the things they love doing can become a career."



Tyus Madden and Trinaya Kodavati work together on the pollen collection experiment

Benson added that bringing in an engineer to work with students aligns well with the school's hopes of becoming a STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) school in the future. District 197 is currently exploring opportunities to create additional magnet schools as district-wide choice options for families in District 197 and surrounding areas.

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