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Bridge building exercise sparks STEM camps for kids

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By Sarah Lindenfeld Hall

Moni Singh was building play bridges with her kids one day, testing which kinds of designs would support the most pencils, when she saw their excitement about the activity.

That's when Singh, an engineer by training, realized that she might be on to something.

"That spark in their eye told me that we could make it broader," she said.

So Singh launched **STEM for Kids** a year ago. She provides year-round camps, afterschool programs and workshops that focus on science, technology, engineering and math.

Singh has been on what she calls a life-long "pursuit of smartness." As an engineer and technologist who holds a master's of business administration from Duke, she has worked to bring several technologies to the market for wireless phones, smart meters and other products.

But after years in the corporate world, she said she's thrilled to see the excitement and curiosity in the kids who are part of her programs.

"This is very fulfilling because it feels like I'm making an impact ... on the next generation of people's minds," she said.



That session building bridges with her kids, now 8 and 7, was just one of _____ the reasons she started the program.

There were their endless questions and interest about how things worked - from why do rainbows form to how do planes fly. And there was a newspaper article in the Wall Street Journal about college students dropping their science majors because the classes were just too hard.

Singh figured that if young kids, who were curious about the world, had a chance to learn about science early on, it might not seem so daunting once they are in college.

"There's a lot we can do to inspire children when they are really young," she said, calling them "fertile seeds."

STEM for Kids focuses on elementary school kids. The programs are fun and educational. Camps focus on engineering topics, including civil, mechanical, environmental and aerospace engineering. Singh is adding more programs in the coming months, including computers and critical thinking, robotics and electrical engineering.

The response has been great, she tells me. In the first seven months, STEM for Kids has served more than 647 children. And Singh has big plans for growth.

Singh said her hope isn't that all of the kids who go through her program become scientists and engineers. Instead, she hopes that the programs allow kids to explore the fields of science, technology, engineering and math so they can make educated decisions as they consider their futures.

"It exercises the brain muscle," she tells me.

For more about the program, watch my video interview with Singh and go to the **STEM for Kids website**. She is offering a **special deal** now for PTAs.

Her programs are offered in north Raleigh, though she has plans to expand soon so stay tuned to her website for details.

Source: <http://www.wral.com/bridge-building-exercise-sparks-stem-camps-for-kids/11752192/>