

# Spring break science

## Camp offers hands-on learning

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HOUGHTON - During their spring break, some Copper Country elementary- and middle-school students got a chance to explore science out of their classrooms.



Garrett Neese/Daily Mining Gazette

Ava Engler and Rachael Pellizzaro, both fourth-grade students at Barkell Elementary School in Hancock, race Lego vehicles on a Maglev track during the Spring Break Science Camp at Michigan Technological University. The three-day camp had students from first through sixth grades.

First- through sixth-grade students took part in the second annual Spring Break Science Camp, which took place Tuesday through Thursday at Michigan Technological University.

"We like to have these camps because it's an opportunity for these kids to learn about science and engineering in a hands-on way," said Joan Chadde, director of the Center for Science and Environmental Outreach, which co-sponsored the event along with the Western Upper Peninsula Math and Science Center and the Great Lakes Research Center. "They've got available time, being out of the classroom, and it's challenging for teachers to do a lot of hands-on projects."

First- through third-graders took part in "Engineering in Our World!" They tackled programs such as designing bridges, and had visits from professional engineers. In the fourth- through sixth-grade "A Taste of Tech," students engaged in activities throughout the campus, whether seeing worms make soil in the Forestry building's Rhizotron or testing a driving simulator in the Mechanical Engineering-Engineering Mechanics building.

"It's really important because it starts them thinking about what they can be, career-wise," Chadde said. "It's hard for kids to really get much exposure to the broad diversity of options. ... it just plants ideas, makes them think about what they could do."

Amy Hakala, a fifth-grade teacher at C-L-K Elementary School, had two children in the camp. She appreciated that kids learn new things, and find out more about Michigan Tech.

"It must be very good, because at night my kids would review with their father, and it was verbatim," she said.

Thursday afternoon, the older group was studying rail transportation and designing Lego vehicles to operate on a Maglev track.

This being Ava Engler's first year in the Copper Country, the Barkell Elementary School fourth-grader wanted to learn about the options in the area, as well as about science.

"We did some cool things," she said. "We made ice cream out of liquid nitrogen. It was pretty much a bowl of milk and sugar, and then we put liquid nitrogen in it."

Madison Minerick, a third-grade student from Houghton Elementary School, came because she thought it would be fun to learn about civil, material and chemical engineering.

"I thought it was pretty fun trying to engineer bridges, and improve Play-Doh and building a wall," she said.