

# Planting Seeds Today for Engineers Tomorrow

## Team Inspire Reaches Out to Fifth Graders

Within the next five to seven years, the Corps of Engineers will undergo a significant loss in staff as its aging workforce retires. Recently, the Corps has experienced difficulty in recruiting engineering and science graduates to fill critical job vacancies. This is due in part to the scarcity of students graduating in math, science and engineering fields.

Studies have shown that students' performance in math and science declines after the fourth grade. To help alleviate this issue, the Corps' South Atlantic Division turned to its annual Leadership Development Program. This year, the LDP team chose to focus its efforts on educating today's youth about science and engineering fields within the Corps. Known as Team Inspire, the group targeted students in the fifth grade, since studies have shown this is a critical age for influencing students to consider their career paths.

The Savannah District contributed to Team Inspire by visiting May Howard Elementary School for an eight-week engineering program, February through April. Once a week, the team focused on a different field of study in the Corps. By combining hands-on experiments, presentations and discussions, the students got a sense of what it's like to be an engineer with the Corps.

At the end of the program, the class took a field trip to Hunter Army Airfield, where they saw construction sites, obstacle courses and the day-to-day activities of Corps employees on the job.

Team Inspire also visited Hardeeville Elementary / Middle / High School in April, where a group of 120 students learned about jobs in the Corps. After hearing

a few words from Deputy Commander Lt. Col. David London, the students rotated to various stations, where they learned about safety, geotechnical engineering, architecture, soils and hazardous materials.

In February, the district did similar presentations at May Howard Elementary and Hodge Elementary as part of National Engineer Week. London and district team members engaged the students with stories about their exciting careers and showed them how engineering relates to everyday life.

"Just about everything we use in our society and all the structures we have are put together by engineering," London told the children. "To play video games, to go to the lake, even to be in this building – you have to have engineering to make it possible." 

*By Tracy Robillard, Staff Writer*



Chris Reinhardt, a Leadership Development Program participant, assists fifth graders at May Howard Elementary, Savannah, with a fresh water experiment. *Photo provided Chris Reinhardt.*