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Columbia Engineering and Services, Inc. Celebrates National Engineers Week by Mentoring Potential Future Engineers

A true “day in the life” experience for students

On Tuesday, February 20, 28 students from Coleman Middle School will spend the day at Columbia Engineering getting hands-on experience while exploring the roles of civil engineers. By hosting members of Coleman Middle’s 8th grade Fundamentals of Engineering class, Columbia Engineering is helping to foster the mission of the school in building 21st century learners who are able to critically think, communicate, collaborate, and be creative through problem-based and integrated learning opportunities in science, technology, engineering, arts, and math.

In Preparation for the February National Engineers Week Program Day

Randy Strunk, associate owner and professional engineer at Columbia Engineering, along with **Linda Cerjan**, Columbia’s marketing manager who also serves as a member of the Coleman Middle School Advisory Committee, have worked to create a plan to host the students. Strunk and Cerjan are working in collaboration with Coleman Middle staff members-- **Fundamentals of Engineering Teacher LaShandia Hill** and **STEAM Coordinator Sheila Harmony**-- to plan this exciting day. Mr. Strunk and Mrs. Hill have discussed the AutoCAD skills that students need to master for this hands-on experience, in addition to the need for familiarity with other field-related information. The first week in February, Mr. Strunk led a pre-program information session for the Fundamentals of Engineering class. Mr. Strunk provided a brief overview of Columbia Engineering and of the field of civil engineering. He also prompted discussion regarding students’ thoughts on the impact of the field of engineering. Mr. Strunk brought along two young engineers from his department to join him at Coleman Middle for students to ask questions. The students were curious about such topics as education requirements, salaries, and responsibilities associated with the role of civil engineers.

Project-Based Learning in Action

The 28 students, divided into six groups, will function as independent civil engineering firms for the program day, complete with student-chosen firm names and student-created logos.

Approximately 20 of Columbia Engineering's 39 staff members will be involved in providing the hands-on engineering experience for the students. The day will be a fully interactive experience with information sessions and breakout exercises addressing components from the project's beginning through the end. Information sessions will include client interaction/expectations, an overview of land planning/site design, restrictions, parking needs, drainage, entrance and exit requirements from the main road, and water quality. The day will culminate with students completing an actual site design and presentation of their respective designs to a panel of engineering judges. The student "firm" with the best presentation and design will receive an award.

Before the students leave, Mr. Strunk will provide a review of the real-life applications of this project. It is the hope of Columbia Engineering staff that through this interactive day, students will gain insight into the many components involved in building communities. Columbia Engineering staff believe that after this experience, as students look at their surroundings, they will see their communities in a new light. The leadership at Columbia Engineering also are hopeful that this hands-on "day in the life of a civil engineer" experience will encourage students to continue seeking opportunities to actively research their unlimited options for career choices.



Lunch meeting with Columbia Engineering Staff to review the National Engineers Week Program Day Agenda