Vidor Middle School Science Fair Report

On October 16, 2010 five STAIRSTEP; Joshua McBride, Kathlyn Doss, Valerie Juarez, Nicolas Brandes and an unnamed physics student; and one INSPIRED, Daniel Vincent, students participated in the Vidor Middle School Science Fair coordinated by Nicolas Brandes. The idea of this event was to excite and encourage exploration of middle schoolers into the various fields of science. That Saturday physics, Earth and space science, and computer science set up booths in and around the gym to show the children what we have learned over time about our fields and help them to understand a little more about those fields.

We don’t know the absolute age group of who attended or where they are from. However, the general consensus is that STAIRSTEP’s participation in this event was very beneficial. As Josh McBride put it, “There was a tremendous amount of interest among many students over science and the geosciences in particular. I was very pleased to be able to see young students enthusiastic about furthering their education in science and being able to talk to them.” I think that sentiment sums it up the best. However, this was not limited to Earth and space sciences. Children flocked to all of our booths, and at times we were so packed that I didn’t think we would be able to talk to them all. Yet, we did manage somehow.

Afterwards, when asked what we learned the physics student responded, “Kids like learning.” He’s right. The others said the same thing. They enjoyed the wonder of the robots, the mysteries of the fossils, minerals and rocks. However, the physics department really sent the message home. They brought enough theatricality to the event that sent the children away in an excited state of wonder and amazement, and I think that’s where we need to go next. The computer science students suggested we make brochures and posters for them to look at which would give them something more to help them understand and the brochures would give them something to think about later. However, the one thing that we absolutely need is to have math and chemistry participate. They would greatly benefit from being there, and the teachers at Vidor want it. As Josh McBride put it, “A husband of one of the teachers at the school was a chemical engineer and decided to take it upon himself to represent the chemistry section since the department turned down the offer.” Chemistry needs to be there so we can have a united front and all the teachers can point to Lamar’s science programs and say, “See what they are doing? Can you do that?”