

Building Blocks of Change

KidGINEER exposes minority youth to careers in math, science and technology.

Every Saturday morning for six weeks at a time, Andrea Hence Evans is a witness to how creative young curious minds are. Three years ago the patent and trademark attorney launched KidGINEER, a Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) program that caters to children ages 8 to 12 in underserved communities.

KidGINEER's program serves Black and Hispanic children in Washington, D.C. Participants build model homes, learn about chemical reactions or build their own video game. Evans notes that the program dispels the myth that youth can't grasp advanced concepts in math and science. They are genuinely excited about it.

"A lot of what we do does not relate to the classroom," says Evans. "Unfortunately school systems are behind. A lot of people can't understand that kids this young can understand and grasp these concepts."

KidGINEER was inspired by Evans' own upbringing. Many of her relatives are in STEM fields and she was constantly exposed to STEM opportunities and encouraged to pursue a career in one of these fields.

"I was never told math and science are

difficult as some children are told today. When it did become challenging I had my family to lean on," says Evans who was recently honored by President Obama as one of the Champions of Change for her work with KidGINEER.



Ally. Andrea Hence Evans works with youth in the STEM program KidGINEER in Washington, D.C.

Evans hopes to give minority youth the same opportunities she had as a young child. She notes that by the third grade kids lose interest in math and science because of the perception that it is challenging.

To date, more than 400 children have participated in KidGINEER since it was created three years ago. As the National Science Foundation reports, while minorities have made substantial strides in the industry, representation in science and engineering jobs remain low; with under 1,000 represented in 2010.

"My hope is that the children we're exposing to the program will pursue careers in the field. STEM is around us

everyday. We need to continue to encourage our children so they can take advantage of the STEM opportunities out there," says Evans.

— Tiffany E. Browne



The number of states where no Black students took the advanced placement exam in computer science