

# CampBio brings out the scientists in kids

BY KELLY GIFFORD | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT AUGUST 22, 2014

Being stuck in a classroom is the last place any middle schooler wants to be during summer vacation. But when the classroom is the world-renowned Whitehead Institute, the teachers are real scientists, and the assignments include dissecting frogs and extracting DNA, spending time in the classroom doesn't seem all that bad.

Seventeen New England rising sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-graders recently attended CampBio, a weeklong science camp collaboration between the Whitehead Institute and Science From Scientists, aimed at sparking middle schoolers' interest in science careers. Sure, these kids have a long way to go before becoming full-fledged scientists, but Amy Tremblay, public programs officer for Whitehead Institute, said a lifelong love of science starts in the classroom.

"We wanted to create a program that was hands on, new, and fresh," Tremblay said. "There are few programs in the area that fill this need and for this age group, which is such a crucial one in terms of keeping an interest in the sciences."

Now in its second year, CampBio introduces students to a variety of biology-related lessons and experiments ranging from nutrition to anatomy. Scientists working at the Whitehead Institute join in with instructors from Science From Scientists, a nonprofit that works toward sparking youth interest in science, technology, engineering and math, to provide students with an expanded curriculum from what they would not normally receive at school. The second session of CampBio ended Aug. 22.

Enthusiasm for the program was not in short supply, and not just from the students eager to dissect owl pellets or mash fruit during the camp's many activities. The instructors and guest speakers were just as excited about students' interest.

Johan Jaenisch, technical assistant in the Gehring Lab at Whitehead, spoke to the students during plant biology day. He said for many students, even older ones, having a stuffy teacher or professor can break someone's interest.

"There are so many barriers to entry in science fields," he said. "But, for instance, you can make a lesson about plants and nutrition approachable by working with the plants themselves. It's those simple things that spark interest."

Julia Kraplin, a 13-year-old from Holliston, pulled out her iPhone to take pictures of her partners prepping a frog for dissection on the last day of camp. The group of girls giggled, winced, and gave a few resounding "ewwws" as they made their first incisions.

"This is so gross but, like, totally cool," Kraplin said to her partner.

Susan Lindquist, a Whitehead member and professor of biology at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said she "love, love, loves" her profession and wanted to see a program that gave young students a chance to get hands-on experience with the help of working scientists.

"Kids are natural explorers," said Lindquist. "But it's been surprising to me to see how many of them lose their excitement about science as they pass from middle school to high school."

Eliminating the "uncool" stereotype associated with science jobs is the cornerstone of Science From Scientists' work. Erika Ebbel Angle, founder and executive chairman of the board at Science From Scientists and former Miss Massachusetts in 2004, said putting a positive role model in front of kids in their early teen years can make all the difference.

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## The Boston Globe



Screenshot of the actual news article at <http://www.bostonglobe.com/lifestyle/2014/08/22/campbio/QCA3RVl4nV11FqfAxjARN/story.html>

*“CampBio brings out the scientists in kids”  
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“Our instructors [at Science From Scientists] are so much more than just scientists, they are athletes, artists, musicians,” Angle said. “Showing kids that you can be well rounded and still pursue science as a career is key, and this camp with Whitehead is helping us continue that.”

Science From Scientists worked alongside teachers in 27 schools across Massachusetts last year, reaching about 6,000 students, Angle said. The Whitehead Institute also works with area science teachers through a monthly seminar program that runs from October to June about cutting-edge science.

Thirteen-year-old Ethan DaSilva, of Hanover, and 12-year-old Rohan Prasad, of Westford, picked through an owl pellet with tweezers. DaSilva and Prasad pulled out several small bones and matched them with scaled drawings on a chart to help identify what animal the owl had eaten.

“I love biology a lot, and this is my first science camp. It’s been really fun all week,” DaSilva said. And by the looks of his smile, CampBio won’t be his last.

*Kelly Gifford can be reach at  
kelly.gifford@globe.com.  
Follow her on Twitter @kelgiff.*

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