



The Early Childhood Education *Bulletin*

Tinkering with STEAM

When children tinker, they strengthen their innate creativity and learn important STEAM concepts. They also develop strong problem solving skills and learn the importance of perseverance as they encounter and find solutions to challenges.

Tinkering encourages children to engage in the thinking that will allow them to become the inventors and engineers of our future and design creative solutions to the problems our world faces.

SPOTLIGHT

Tinkering to Learn with STEAM

By Kat Lai, MA and Jennifer Malhoyt-Lee, MA

Teachers and administrators at three Palm Beach County and three Broward County preschools have successfully completed the STEAM Investigations program through Palm Beach State College's Institute of Excellence. This program, generously funded by PNC's Grow Up Great program, included 48 hours of professional development, field trips and events at area museums (South Florida Science Center and Aquarium in West Palm Beach and the Young At Art Museum in Davie), as well as STEAM materials for classrooms and for families. STEAM Fairs at the schools included interactive materials for the children to investigate with the support and facilitation of trained teachers.

The centers have embraced the concepts they learned in the trainings and are revising their approaches to teaching our youngest thinkers and learners. For example, Opportunity Early Childhood and Family Center recently embarked on an investigation of architecture, incorporating concepts of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) throughout children's experience.

Teachers noticed children's interest in architecture as they explored building in the block area. Teachers added books and images of architecture from around the world into the classroom. Children began to tinker with various materials such as popsicle sticks, paper, small glass mosaic tiles, recycled materials, and other 'found objects' and worked together to create their own city complete with hotels, libraries, schools, police stations, and hospitals.



Children's work on display at the 2015 National Urban League Conference. Ft. Lauderdale, FL