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Public Affairs, Roger Williams University

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Local Fifth Graders Go To College for the Day

More than 300 fifth graders from the Bristol/Warren School District spent the day on campus today to experience a day in the life of a college student.

Senior Mechanical Engineering Student Taylor Abrahamian helps “engineering/technology” major students build a bridge with lego blocks for the annual 5th Grade Day event at RWU. Image Credit: RWU

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More than 300 local students descended on the Roger Williams University campus today for the annual 5th Grade Day event.

Now in its ninth year, the program was created to provide elementary students with an opportunity to explore the possibility of future careers, set high academic goals, tour the campus and participate in team-building activities.

Superintendent Mario Andrade helped kick-off the day’s activities by offering welcoming remarks to the students and also presenting a plaque of appreciation to KC Ferrara, director of the University’s Feinstein Center for Service Learning and Community Engagement.

“I want to acknowledge Roger Williams University for their spirit and commitment to hosting the ninth annual 5th Grade Day and for inspiring our students to dream big,” says Andrade.
The 5th graders selected a “major” prior to arriving to campus and were then led in small groups by a current RWU student in that course of study, allowing the elementary students to find out specific academic expectations of that major. Hugh Cole School Student Joe Russell selected “criminal justice” for his interest in law while his peer Otto Kallfelz choose “engineering/technology” because he enjoys working with computers.

More than 70 RWU student volunteers discussed their majors and college life while showing the fifth graders the Performing Arts Center, North Campus Residence Hall, School of Architecture, Library, Commons, and the Marine and Natural Science building. Students then attended an Honors Program presentation, engaged in some fun gym activities led by the varsity athletic teams and participated in a “game show”-type event that challenged the students with both Rhode Island and RWU trivia questions.

Fifth Grade Day has proven to leave a lasting impact on the elementary students who have participated to date, Ferrara says. Previous data from 2011 shows that the fifth graders gained knowledge of campus culture by 22 percent and academic expectations by 26 percent. The program prides itself on providing students with the importance of starting early in getting a good education and the academic background needed to pursue their future careers.