

*Dear Lynn,*

*We live in Santa Cruz, and my ten year old daughter is very interested in science. I'm wondering if there are any programs taking place in our area that my daughter might participate in?*

*Sincerely, Alberta Einstein*

Dear Alberta Einstein,

Taking cue's from research in formal education, which indicates that occasional or one-shot training has little impact on the way teachers present science material to their students, the Santa Cruz County 4-H Youth Development Program is engaged in a three-year research project with afterschool providers in Santa Cruz and Soquel to measure how participation in regular, on-going science training impacts the ability of afterschool providers to successfully deliver science in afterschool settings.

Each month, afterschool providers from the Campus Kids Connection INC. spend three hours in training with UCCE Santa Cruz County 4-H YDP staff learning how to facilitate open-ended and guided explorations of science and engineering topics. As part of a national initiative to promote long term professional development training for afterschool providers, this project focuses on building staff capacity to implement high quality, hands-on science and engineering projects in order to impact the way afterschool programs contribute to science education.

During the initial five months of the project, seven afterschool sites delivered 115 hours of hands-on science education to over 240 kindergarten through fifth grade youth, with providers participating in over 15 hours of education and training. In assessing provider confidence in teaching and explaining science content to students, ninety two percent of providers indicated an increase in confidence from either "only a little confident" or "somewhat confident" to "very confident" or "extremely confident" as a result of participating in this project. In assessing provider interpretation of how well children enjoyed the science activities, ninety four percent ranked student enjoyment in the "some" to "a great deal" range.

For additional information about this project, and others in the areas of youth science education, contact the University of California Cooperative Extension Youth Development Program in Santa Cruz County.