



## Project CREATE Central Florida Engineering Fair K-12 Korner—Konnnecting Engineers with Kids

By David M. Schmitt, PE

The FES Central Florida Chapter developed a program to help students better understand the creative thinking and problem-solving process in a non-competitive environment (i.e., it is emphasized that there are no right or wrong answers, only ideas and solutions). The program is called Project CREATE (Creative Responses from Elementary Age ThinkErs), and started in 1993 with four elementary schools in Orange and Seminole Counties. The program now reaches out to 24 schools in two counties. Project CREATE demonstrates how creative thinking and problem-solving is accomplished. Students are presented with a challenge and work together as a class to find a solution(s).



Each school and class involved in Project CREATE is invited to the annual Engineering Expo at the Orlando Arena. The students display their models and compare their project solutions with other classes. The Expo is held the last Friday of February, and provides students with three events to showcase their creative thinking and problem-solving skills. They are the egg drop and paper airplane competitions, and a scavenger hunt.

The Central Florida Chapter members receive numerous accolades and appreciation for their time and support provided to the students. Below is a summary of the impact the program has made in Orange County Public Schools.

“I have had the opportunity to be part of Project CREATE and the Central Florida Engineering Fair for the past 17 years. As a parent, I worked with my own children and their classes to stretch their thinking and work together to produce an engineering design proposal. As a teacher, I have worked with over 900 students guiding them through the project phase, encouraging them to apply the science skills they have learned in class, working as a cohesive team and honing their presentation skills. The children have grown through the guidance of local engineers researching the building concepts in bridge construction. They have researched bridges around the world and enjoyed seeing their creations hold an amazing amount of weight. They have studied Bernoulli’s Principle and been guided by guest speakers in the aviation industry to create and launch the most efficient paper airplane possible. The students have accepted the challenge of the Egg Drop Competition and learned that it is indeed possible to create a device that will safely land a raw egg on concrete four stories below, while allowing for the effects of wind drift as they aim to hit a specific target. The students have learned the “soft skills” of teamwork, effective public speaking, persistence in overcoming obstacles, and achieving the desired end product as the result of calm, steady work. I applaud the Central Florida Engineering Society for providing the leadership for this event and acknowledge the long-term, positive impact it has had on our students.”

—Susan F. Hoover, Gifted Teacher at Orange County Public Schools.

To learn more about Project CREATE visit [www.fleng.org](http://www.fleng.org). ■



Egg Drop Competition



Paper Airplane Competition

