

LC's Fire Science Program Hosts “Burn ‘n’ Learn” STEM Experience for Educators

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GODFREY — Lewis and Clark Community College’s Fire Science program, in partnership with the Illinois Regional Office of Education 40 (ROE 40), hosted “Burn ‘n’ Learn: Firefighting and STEM” recently at the college’s Bethalto Education Center, offering area educators a hands-on professional development experience connecting classroom concepts to real-world applications.

Led by Fire Science Program Coordinator Ed Burnley and instructor Tanner Sweetman, with support from firefighter Cole Schrage, the event immersed educators in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics principles embedded in modern firefighting. Participants experienced the physical demands of the profession by wearing full gear and engaged in a series of practical exercises.

Activities included cutting rebar, performing roof ventilation, extinguishing a live fire, operating a thermal imaging camera, analyzing hazardous materials with a multi-gas detector and rappelling to understand mechanical advantage. Educators also observed a mock hazardous materials decontamination line demonstrated by students in the college’s Fire Science Academy.

“Events like this are how we bridge the gap—bringing real-world application into the classroom and creating new pathways for students,” Burnley said. Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive.

One educator described the experience as “one of my favorite professional development exercises,” adding “everyone did a great job.” Another noted the value of the format, calling it “a great way for teachers to see how classroom concepts are used in the professional world.”

The Fire Science program plans to continue offering experiential learning opportunities designed to strengthen connections between education and career pathways in emergency services and STEM fields.

To learn more about LC's Fire Science program, contact Burnley at eburnley@lc.edu or visit the website at www.lc.edu.