



AZUSA

UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

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100 Slauson Middle School Students Construct Domes, Launch Gliders during STEM Competition

Students Team with Engineers, College Students during Viva Technology Day

More than 100 students from Azusa Unified's Slauson Middle School constructed multi-colored geodesic domes and launched hand-made gliders across Memorial Park Gym on Dec. 4 during a series of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) competitions.

Great Minds in STEM Viva Technology Day paired seventh-graders in STEM and Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) programs with engineers from Northrop Grumman, the event's sponsor, and with college students majoring in STEM subjects. Students and mentors worked together to develop winning products.

"This incredible competition helped spark excitement among our students for STEM subjects, which in turn will help prepare them for their college journeys and challenges of today's technology-driven careers," Superintendent Dr. Linda Kaminski said.

Teams built geodesic domes from multi-colored straws, tape and platforms in the middle to see whose structure would sustain the most weight. They crafted gliders with wooden-stick bodies, Styrofoam-plate wings and rubber weights at their noses to see whose would soar the farthest.

The day's final challenge pushed teams to devise solutions to potential problems in the year 3000, drawing on assigned STEM fields, such as astrophysics, forensics and electrical engineering, to develop a prototype. Each team gave a 30-second presentation on its invention.

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“This was an exciting opportunity for our students to apply their STEM knowledge to solve different challenges,” Slauson Principal Linda McNary said. “They were also able to learn from and interact with college students and professionals in STEM fields, which will broaden their perspectives on the different paths they can embark on in their future.”

Between the activities, college students and engineers talked to students about their career and college experiences. Slauson alumna Sylvia Block, an engineer at Northrop Grumman, encouraged students to pursue their dreams.

“I went from dissecting guinea pigs in the seventh grade at Slauson to testing satellites and watching rockets launch as a professional,” Block said. “It was a difficult journey to get through my studies and build my career, but if it’s your dream, you can do it.”

Teams earned Viva Dollars by winning challenges and exhibiting good behavior; the dollars became entries for a drawing to win iPod shuffles, drones and construction kits for remote control spider robots.

“Connecting with our community and local organizations helps us to provide a wide range of academic experiences for our students,” Board of Education President Yolanda Rodriguez-Peña said. “It is so exciting to see the projects they’re involved with and inspire them to continue studying within these in-demand career fields.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS

1STEM: Slauson Middle School seventh-graders collaborate to attach a weight holder in the center of a newly created geodesic dome during Great Minds in STEM Viva Technology Day on Dec. 4 at Memorial Park Gym in Azusa.

2STEM: Slauson Middle School students work together to build a glider that can be launched the furthest across Azusa’s Memorial Park Gym during a competitive activity at the Great Minds in STEM Viva Technology Day, held Dec. 4.

3STEM: Dozens of geodesic domes spread across Memorial Park Gym in Azusa during the Great Minds in STEM Viva Technology Day held Dec. 4. More than 100 Slauson Middle School seventh-graders competed in the event.

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