

Innovations

How baseball cards are being used to get kids excited about science

By **Matt McFarland** April 29

There's plenty of interest in creative ways to draw kids to math, science and engineering. On Tuesday, the organizers of X-STEM took a unique approach. At the event in Washington, D.C., students were handed trading cards of the scientists and engineers who spoke. The cards are modeled after baseball cards, with facts about home towns, hobbies and accomplishments.

"We're trying to serve these folks up to these students that would normally never even know these people existed," said Marc Schulman, executive director of the USA Science and Engineering Festival, which organized the event. "I just thought, wouldn't it be cool if we made trading cards with all these speakers on them and the kids could take them home just like they do their favorite baseball card. It's those types of things that you kind of have to get creative with this generation."

The event drew 4,300 students, and 34 speakers such as inventor Dean Kamen. There were workshops and demos to promote an interest in the STEM fields.

"The research shows that if students do not have a genuine interest in math and science by the time they are out of sixth grade or by the time they get into middle school, the percentage of them picking up those categories are slim to none," Schulman said. "And if they are not exposed to it by high school it's almost zero, that they will pursue that type of career."

I stopped by as the event was winding down to chat with Schulman. The cards were so popular with the kids that it was a struggle to find a few extras to share as examples.

The thinking behind the cards and the event is that if scientists and engineers are celebrated and put on a pedestal like athletes and entertainers, more students will be drawn to those lines of work.

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Matt McFarland is the editor of Innovations. He's always looking for the next big thing. You can find him on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).
