The path to confidence in STEM learning starts with stoking a sense of curiosity and a willingness to try new things.

To encourage families to explore hands-on learning together, in 2021 Kansas City participated for the first time in Remake Learning Days Across America, the nation’s largest festival of innovative learning. From May 1-10, nearly 70 organizations offered 100+ learning events and activities to the KC community, engaging caregivers, parents and kids. Kansas City was one of 17 regions participating in the national campaign, which generated more than 1,000 learning experiences for families around the country.

Spearheaded locally by the KC STEM Alliance with support from The DeBruce Foundation, the activities spanned six learning themes.

**Engaging Families**

**Real World Learning**

Real World Learning is a Kansas City community initiative with the goal of ensuring every student is prepared for future learning and work—graduating with a diploma plus one or more experiences valued by employers and higher education.

With support from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, 30+ school districts are working on transforming the high school experience with built-in internships, engaging experiences, expanded access to college credit courses and entrepreneurial experiences. Through immersive experiences, real-world projects and internships across a multitude of interests, learners gain skills to navigate what comes next—and employers help share and prepare today’s students to become the talent of tomorrow.

**Agilities & Essential Skills**

Students can use The DeBruce Foundation's Agile Work Profiler and Career Explorer Tools to explore occupations and expand career pathways. Now, new research sponsored by the foundation offers additional guidance for helping students develop the essential skills needed for success across all jobs.

A key finding: extracurricular activities were cited as the most influential experience for building Essential Skills, especially Communication, Collaboration and Executive Function. Out-of-school STEM partners can play a significant role in helping students gain these Essential Skills.
All students deserve high quality, equitable and inclusive STEM learning experiences, both in and out of school. However, a significant racial gap exists both in STEM professions and in learning spaces.

**Closing the Racial Gap**

Building on work started by a STEM Connect-KC work group, a broader professional learning community kicks off Sept. 15 with a panel discussion featuring regional leaders in this work. Join this Zoom session to dive into why and how the data we capture can be put to work in powerful ways that improve individual programs, empower students and families, and deepen our understanding of overall ecosystem effectiveness. To be successful in telling the full story of student achievement requires broad engagement of organizations of all sizes and missions.

Since then, a number of partners passionate about this work have begun meeting monthly in a work group led by KC STEM Alliance Program Consultant Marian McCellan. They are sharing best practices, raising awareness and leveraging respective networks to reach more girls with quality STEM experiences and mentors.

**Closing the Gender Gap**

In early 2021, the KC STEM Alliance released a report on the K-12 STEM education gender gap based on a series of focus group conversations with 25 girls and women.

Although work to reach girls with STEM opportunities is progressing, the report noted that significant socio-economic, racial and environmental barriers remain, and that to make meaningful progress will require a community-based approach.

Student success in school, and ultimately in the workforce, relies on learning key skills and knowledge both in school and out of school. However, capturing the myriad pathways of student experiences from education to the workplace is extremely challenging. It requires intentional strategies to capture, share, link and evaluate key data points.

Partners in the region are looking at ways to put systems and partnerships in place to create a robust STEM data dashboard that can tell the story of STEM education in Kansas City.

Like other communities, our goal is to use this data to assess student achievement and persistence; identify gaps; and look for policies and strategies that work, especially for under-represented students of color.

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**Measuring Impact: Regional Data**

Every learning opportunity a student experiences has data attached. Linking that data can tell the stories of program effectiveness and student achievement in the classroom and beyond.

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**Broadening Participation in STEM**

Building a diverse and innovative STEM workforce starts with ensuring all students have access to quality STEM experiences.