

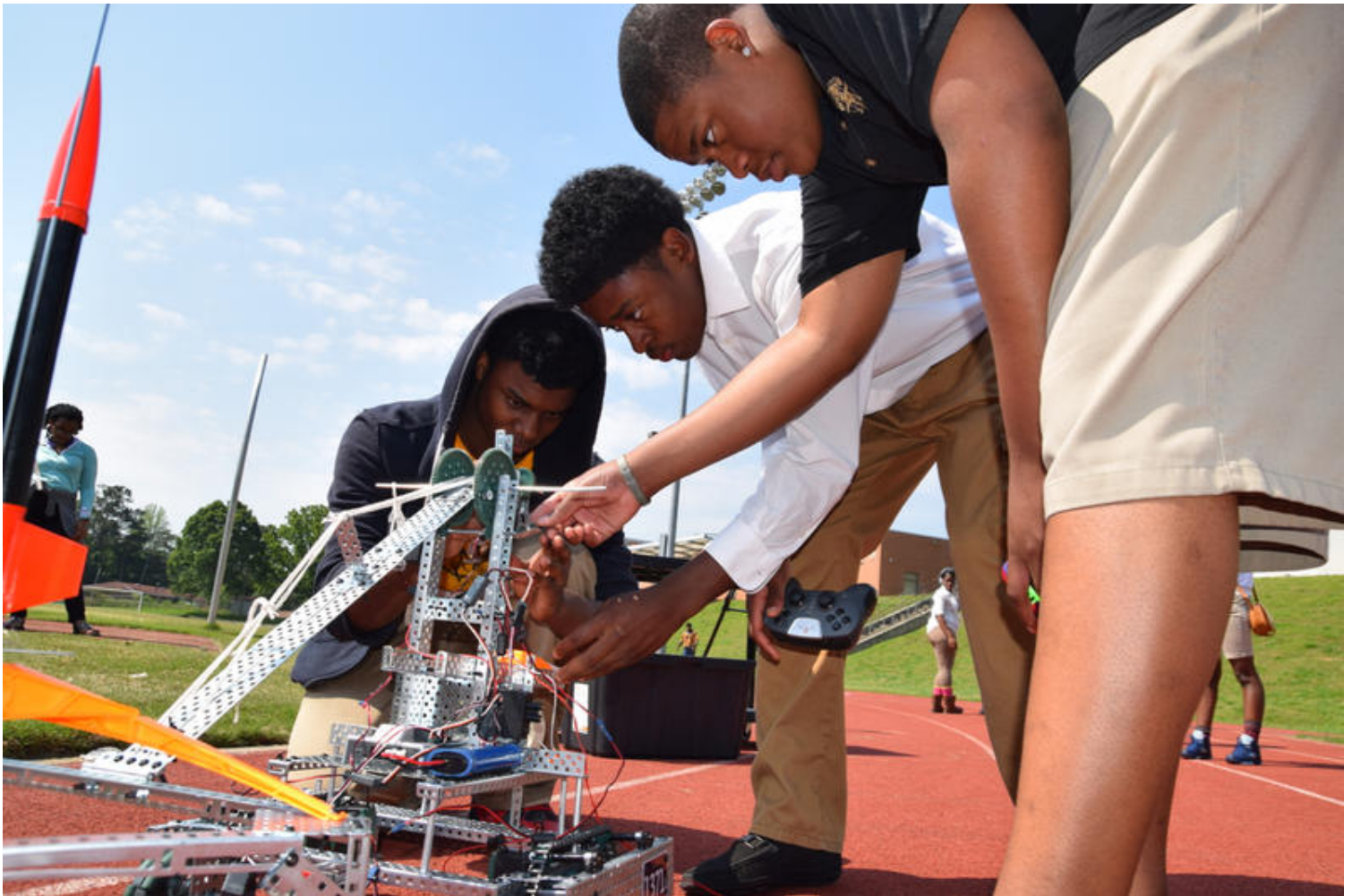


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Atlanta Students Aim For The Stars With Rocket-Building Class

By SHELBY LIN ERDMAN • MAY 8, 2015

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Joshua Koonce, Delante Jordan and Michael Slator Jr, from left to right, put the finishing touches on the rocket pad.

ALISON GUILLORY / WABE



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Frederick Douglass High School engineering teacher Aaron Campbell and his student Drakendra Graham discussed the school's engineering and technology program on "A Closer Look."



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Students at Frederick Douglass High School are aiming for the stars with a little help from their college counterparts.

Georgia Tech is working with Frederick Douglass High to develop a curriculum to help get young people interested in engineering and aerospace careers well before they reach college.

And it might be working. The kids in Aaron Campbell's ninth grade class are working with Georgia Tech students to build model-style rockets.

Campbell said during an interview on "A Closer Look" he was eager to begin working with ninth grade students in this space tech collaboration with Georgia Tech.

"It was important to get students early on, before they became involved in maybe some negative things ... and guide them to be able to do something positive and they responded well to that challenge," Campbell explained.

The dedicated teacher described his group of ninth graders as "some really charged up students" who responded well to the challenge of building model rockets to learn more about the engineering and technology behind rocket launches.

Drakendra Graham is one of those "charged up students."

She was part of the group of high school students who launched four model rockets on Friday with help from Georgia Tech students.

"What I'm most excited about is the fact that we didn't know anything about rocket science or technology, but we just jumped head first and we just enjoyed the challenge," Graham said.

Frederick Douglass High School serves a distressed, economically disadvantaged community. So Campbell works hard to gain his student's interest and keep it.

He said he was "eager to get ninth graders" involved in a space and engineering class.



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Frederick Douglass High School teacher Aaron Campbell, left, teaches ninth grade students like Drakendra Graham an appreciation and love of science and engineering.

CREDIT JASON PARKER / WABE

“Frederick Douglass is in a very challenged neighborhood. It’s an urban school – an inner city school. We have a 91 percent free lunch rate with all the social economic indicators that come with that.”

It seems Campbell may have ignited a spark in at least one of his students. Graham says his class has given her a new appreciation for science and engineering.



“It has peaked my interest in science ... I took away how to be a leader and a follower at the same time and know how to work together with a partner and how to be cohesive. It was just a nice experience,” she said.

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Campbell and Graham explained how the program started, what the objectives are and more on “A Closer Look.”

WABE’s Charles Jones, April Williams, Rose Scott, And Denis O’Hayer contributed to this story.

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