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### **Fort Worth Museum of Science and History encourages kids to be space scientists**

Thanks to a program called GSK Science in the Summer, children in grades 2–6 are getting a chance to explore different career paths in science and technology.

By [Jordan Chapman](#)

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Matthew Olmos, 10, left, and Camila Delgado, 9, look to see whether UV beads reacted with UV light during a science activity as part of GSK Science in the Summer at Uplift Mighty in Fort Worth on Thursday, July 18, 2024. Through GSK Science in the Summer™ and Philadelphia’s The Franklin Institute, the Fort Worth Science and History Museum is bringing an informal, 100% free science and technology program to Fort Worth. (Juan Figueroa / Staff Photographer)

The Fort Worth Museum of Science and History is rocketing science into classrooms this summer. Thanks to a program called [“GSK Science in the Summer”](#), children in grades 2 through 6 are getting a chance to explore different career paths in science and technology.

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“It’s important to spark the love of science when young,” said Linda Higginbotham, GSK’s community partnerships operations manager. GSK, formerly GlaxoSmithKline, is a biopharmaceutical company.

As part of its commitment to diverse and equitable education, the company started GSK Science in the Summer with the Franklin Institute 38 years ago. The Franklin Institute, named after Benjamin Franklin, is a science center and museum located in the heart of Philadelphia.

The program has grown to more than 290 collaborators across the country. Since then, the program has been offered for free with GSK providing the funding and the Franklin Institute developing the curriculum and activities.



Kennedi Johnson, 9, from left, Orlando Plasencia, 10, and William Booker, 10, react as Penny Sessions, an educator with the Fort Worth Science and History Museum, shows how UV beads react when exposed to UV light during a science activity as part of GSK Science in the Summer at Uplift Mighty in Fort Worth on Thursday, July 18, 2024. Through GSK Science in the Summer™ and Philadelphia's The Franklin Institute, the Fort Worth Science and History Museum is bringing an informal, 100% free science and technology program to Fort Worth. (Juan Figueroa / Staff Photographer)

[In 2023, the program reached more than 29,000 children, according to the Franklin Institute.](#)

This year, the theme is: "Be A Space Scientist."

This is the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History's eighth year in the program, according to Rebecca Reed, the museum's outreach and programs manager.

Working with partners at libraries and schools in the Fort Worth-area, the museum typically serves 650 students in the summer. Fort Worth Museum educators run the activities at partner sites like Uplift Summit International Preparatory Primary and Uplift Mighty Preparatory.

In previous years, the museum has had activities that focus on themes like the human body, biology and chemistry. This year, students have been learning about careers in robotics, rocket engineering and spacesuit design.

Alba Alonso is a dean at Uplift Summit International Preparatory Primary. She described one experiment the students conducted involving ultraviolet light.

“They had two UV beads and then a UV flashlight, and then different materials that they would impose between the beads and the flashlight to test which one of those would best protect astronauts from radiation,” she said.



Penny Sessions, an educator with the Fort Worth Science and History Museum, closes her eyes as she asks students whether they think UV light can pass through foam during a science activity as part of GSK Science in the Summer at Uplift Mighty in Fort Worth on Thursday, July 18, 2024. Through GSK Science in the Summer™ and Philadelphia’s The Franklin Institute, the Fort Worth Science and History Museum is bringing an informal, 100% free science and technology program to Fort Worth. (Juan Figueroa / Staff Photographer)

During the same activity at Uplift Mighty Preparatory, Isaiah Durant, a 5th grader, said he liked that everyone worked as a team to figure out which fabrics protected the beads.

Kai Williams, who will be a 6th grader in the fall at Uplift Mighty, said it took creativity to get through the activity and “it showcases your abilities to get things right.” Williams said he’s not sure if he’d become a scientist one day, but he said that he would consider it.

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Educators see a lot of positives to the program. “I’m always eager to jump in on activities with enrichment,” said Denitra Beaulieu, who serves as a principal for Uplift Education’s summer school program, SummerRISE, at Uplift Mighty.

“It’s not only an opportunity for me to just kind of get my eyes on what they’re doing with the kids,” she said. “But it’s an opportunity for me to build relationships with the kids as well — for them to see me doing things other than the normal principal task.”

Beaulieu said that the program helps provide critical thinking skills across scientific fields, and the benefits of GSK Science in the Summer could even be seen as early as the fall, especially for students in 5th grade who are preparing for their STAAR test.

Since 5th grade is the first year students have to answer science questions on the STAAR test, it’s important they receive experiences like GSK Science in the Summer, she said. This is because STAAR science questions may ask a variety of questions that deal with issues ranging from the environment to the life sciences, such as biology, she said.

Penny Sessions and Monica Bejarano are museum educators for the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History, and they lead the activities for the students. They both enjoy not having to test students on what they’ve learned and just helping them enjoy learning.



UV beads turn purple after reacting with UV light during a science activity as part of GSK Science in the Summer at Uplift Mighty in Fort Worth on Thursday, July 18, 2024. Through GSK Science in the Summer™ and Philadelphia's The Franklin Institute, the Fort Worth Science and History Museum is bringing an informal, 100% free science and technology program to Fort Worth. (Juan Figueroa / Staff Photographer)

Bejarano is in her first year of being a museum educator. Last year she was an educator at a school, and she said the two roles are different.

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The students are "learning but don't realize it, but when they're taking a test, they know," Bejarano said.

Sessions introduced the topic of radiation to the students by emphasizing the need to wear sunscreen and sunglasses to protect their skin and eyes. They were separated into groups of two to three students, and then decided if the UV beads turned pink or showed no difference after being placed under the different fabrics.

After the activity, Sessions asked them questions about space and sunlight in space. She said they were able to answer the questions confidently.

Students looking for summer activities can find free activities on the [GSK Science in the Summer website at https://scienceinthesummer.fi.edu/be-a-space-scientist](https://scienceinthesummer.fi.edu/be-a-space-scientist).