



SFUSD SAN FRANCISCO
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE

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Students Use Math, Engineering Concepts to Build Bridges Out of Popsicle Sticks in Summer Distance Learning Program

SFUSD's Black Star Rising program and [UCSF/MESA](#) showcase a creative approach to hands-on virtual learning

San Francisco (July 14, 2020) - Students in the San Francisco Unified School District's Black Star Rising 9th Grade STEM summer high school readiness and success program will engage in a virtual [UCSF/Mathematics Engineering Science Achievement \(MESA\)](#) bridge-building contest this week to showcase their use of the math and engineering concepts they learned over the past five weeks.

Now in its fourth year, Black Star Rising is a cohort-based high school readiness and success program designed to prepare rising African American high school students for STEM careers through direct math and science instruction, career exposure, early college coursework, and an introduction to workplace readiness skills.

Students receive this support during the course of a five-week summer program along with case management and quarterly check-ins led by SFUSD staff during the regular school year. While school buildings are temporarily closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the program was held virtually this year and, for the first time, included a robotics component.

For the [MESA](#) bridge-building contest, the 43 rising 9th graders in this year's Black Star Rising program used popsicle sticks and Elmer's glue to construct their bridges, which must meet height and width criteria. The students are required to practice scientific writing and students will be turning in their lab books that explain the algebra equations they used to form the slope of the bridge and other features. The students also use their understanding of mathematical proportions to find the Newton values to calculate the load on the deck of the bridge. The completed student bridges were dropped off to the [UCSF/MESA](#) Educational Director over the weekend and this week, each bridge will be tested to determine how many pounds of weight it can hold.

“We are committed to expanding learning opportunities for our African American students. During this time when there is so much learning loss, we are grateful to continue the Black Star Rising program with the support of our community partners” Superintendent Dr. Vincent Matthews said. “The bridge building contest is an example of ways we can be creative and engage students with learning and with each other even while at a distance.”

Members of the media who are interested in covering the bridge contest, or speaking with students and teachers in Black Star Rising, may contact Laura Dudnick at dudnickl@sfusd.edu or (415) 730-0314.