

IGNITING THE SPARK: TECH TREK STEM CAMPS FOR GIRLS

SUMMARY OF SURVEY FINDINGS

Since 1998, AAUW has helped change girls' lives through Tech Trek, an experiential summer camp designed to pique the interest of rising eighth-grade girls in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). A 2013 survey of Tech Trek alumnae who attended the camp in California between 2006 and 2009 demonstrates the program's lasting effects on many levels, including interest and confidence in STEM fields, decision to pursue STEM curricula, and future career plans.

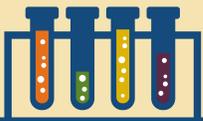
Interest and Confidence in STEM

A majority of alumnae surveyed believe that Tech Trek increased their interest in science (94 percent), technology (77 percent), mathematics (70 percent), engineering (52 percent), and computer programming (44 percent).

Increased self-confidence was another hugely important result.

91%

of girls reported that Tech Trek boosted their self-confidence in their ability to be successful in science classes, and 78 percent said the same for math classes.



Tech Trek operates on the belief that learning and achieving come from applying oneself rather than from an inborn predisposition. The camp builds a set of values and skills that equip girls to be persistent learners in any sphere and work hard to reach their goals. For many girls, the camp experience provides the life-altering "spark" that ignites their interest and encourages them on a path toward success.

Tech Trek was a life-changing experience for me. It sparked my passion for science and math and gave me the confidence to pursue advanced classes and research opportunities. I honestly don't think I would be where I am today without Tech Trek.

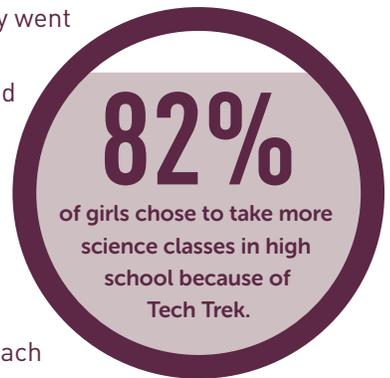
—Former attendee

Decision to Pursue STEM Curricula

Thirty-two percent of respondents said they went on to participate in after-school or extracurricular STEM activities during high school, and many started, led, or joined STEM-focused clubs. Others volunteered for or competed in STEM-related activities.

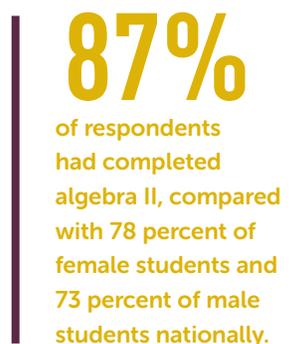
Students commented on the unique value of their one-on-one experiences at Tech Trek as distinct from what they did at school. Many remembered the camp's creative approach through "eye-opening," hands-on activities.

"The short time I spent at Tech Trek gave me the confidence to do what I love by taking advanced math and science courses," said one respondent, who went on to major in biology and neuroscience.



Tech Trek alumnae surpass the national average in most advanced math and science courses:

GIRLS WHO COMPLETED PRECALCULUS IN 2009



The majority (73 percent) of respondents were enrolled in four-year college or university programs and expected to graduate within four years from the time of the survey, and 23 percent were attending two-year colleges.

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Career Plans

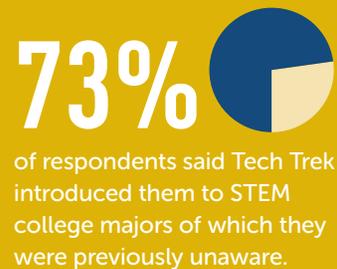
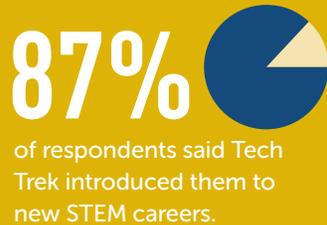
“Tech Trek made me aware of all the possibilities in career choices. I realized how much of the world is dependent upon researchers and engineers.”

—Former attendee



Alumnae credit Tech Trek’s multi-faceted teaching and learning strategies with positively shaping their expectations and expanding their scope of opportunities in STEM.

After seeing, hearing, and working alongside women scientists and mathematicians during camp, many alumnae say they are less susceptible to negative stereotyping about women in STEM and more determined to achieve in whatever career interests them.



Summary

Tech Trek opens up STEM possibilities for girls in many contexts. It expands and influences their academic and social lives, starting in middle school and continuing on into their careers. The program seeks out talented girls, sparks their interest, illuminates the value of a college education, and validates their passions. Tech Trek’s exciting, hands-on approach offers a wide variety of experiences that translate into options well beyond the week of camp.



AAUW empowers all women and girls to reach their highest potential. Find out more on our national website, www.aauw.org. You can also follow us on Twitter (@AAUWSTEM) and on Facebook (www.facebook.com/AAUWSTEM). To learn more about AAUW of California Tech Trek camps, visit www.aauw-techtrek.org.