

900 NYC middle school students shine in Urban Advantage Science Exposition

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Siegel for NewsCalvin Smith (from left), 13, Fernando Vasquez, 13 and Ezekiel Farrell, 13, students at Kappa III in the Bronx show off their project "Bridges."

[Fernando Vasquez](#) yelled into the hallway outside his [Bronx](#) apartment when he learned that his project was being displayed at the Urban Advantage Science Exposition.

Vasquez, a seventh grader at Kappa III in the Bronx, was one of about 900 excited [New York City](#) middle school students who participated in Saturday's event

at the Museum of Natural History.

The exhibition, which began in 2004 with 30 schools, attracted 174 this year and featured projects ranging from music's effect on pulse rate to how dog saliva inhibits bacteria growth.

"It's truly a celebration of work, not a competition," said [Jim Short](#), 45, the director of the [Gottesman Center for Science Teaching and Learning](#).

Short said the science projects were required for eighth graders at city public schools.

[Alvin Cheng](#), an eighth grader at Middle School 104 who lives in Chinatown, decided to explore gender's effect on visual memory. He and three group mates created 21 charts and six pictures that students examined and were tested on a minute later.

The group found that girls have better short-term visual memories than boys.

[Ezekiel Farrell](#), one of Vasquez's group mates, said his group focused on three bridge forms: suspension, steel truss and Roman-arch, and made models of all three types.

Short said the exhibition experience was almost as important as the research that went into the projects.

"Some of these kids have never done anything like this," he said.

Added Farrell, "It's a once in a lifetime experience. You have to live it to realize it."