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IDA Held Science: Unrestricted Event With Alexandria City Public Schools

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (May 2026) — Last week, IDA hosted the annual Science: Unrestricted event at our Potomac Yard facility in Alexandria, Virginia, in partnership with Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS).

This fun-filled, educational STEM event helps students understand that science is relevant to almost everything they do, helpful in their everyday lives as citizens, something they can excel at and an exciting career choice. IDA and ACPS have produced Science: Unrestricted for more than a decade. Each year, the event encourages students to discuss scientific subjects, prompts further discussion with their teachers, initiates discussions about science and STEM with their parents and other family members, and provides some initial ideas about subject areas they may want to pursue.

Science: Unrestricted 2026 provided the opportunity for IDA and ACPS to come together for an evening of exploration, learning and community. ACPS Assistant Director of Community Partnerships & Engagement Gerson Paniagua remarked, “For ACPS students, Science: Unrestricted provides valuable hands-on experiences that build curiosity, confidence and interest in science and technology. Through our partnership with IDA, students are able to explore STEM concepts in an engaging way with industry professionals and discover career pathways that now feel accessible and close to home.”

“Watching students experience how science is magic in real life will always be my favorite part of this event,” said Miranda Swinnen, a researcher at IDA and the coordinator of IDA’s Outreach Program, who led the event’s execution. “ACPS students, IDA, and STEM experts from Virginia Tech, Design and Build Lab (DaBL) at American University, and the Office of Naval Research presented creative and thought-provoking exhibits on 3D printing, cognition and how our brains work, robotics, rockets, space and more. I am grateful for their participation and dedication to IDA’s efforts in community engagement and development, providing a space where learning is fun and accessible to all.”

Student attendees were particularly drawn to the robotics activities, which included a hands-on coding opportunity. When asked about the event, a second-grade student said, “I love this! I think coding the bots is really fun and I heard there are paper airplanes to build. I think everyone should bring their kids here.” A fourth-grade student commented, “I’m having a good time. I was surprised to see the giant blue robot that shoots yellow foam balls.”

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