

Alison Valk.: The following interview is part of Georgia Tech's everyday Georgia interview project. In this interview, students from Cooper middle school discuss their involvement in the baseball launch competition sponsored by Georgia tech and the Atlanta braves. Today is June 28th, 2018. The interview is taking place at Cooper middle school Austell, Georgia interviewer is Alison Valk. The interviewees are. And I'm just gonna pass this around in the same

Aja Jackson: Aja Jackson

Ivie Osagie: Ivie Osagie

Jumoke Ogunsola: Jumoke Ogunsola

Funmilayo Ogunsola: Funmilayo Ogunsola

Stephanie Ruffner: Stephanie Ruffner

Alison Valk: Thank you. Maybe we can just start. Um, so everybody said their name. Maybe everybody can just kind of go around and tell me what they're interested in. And what's your interest in hobbies are? What do you like to spend your time doing?

Funmilayo Ogunsola: I'm just interested in like learning about new cultures and learning different languages and I'm just like being open to learning about different things. Yeah. Oh, um, um, boom. Funmilayo Ogunsola. Okay.

Jumoke Ogunsola: I'm, I'm Jumoke Ogunsola and as from USA that I do like to expand my horizons and different, um, culturally based, um, and even more educationally. So anything that I'm not really sure about or what I don't really know prior to me researching it, then I like to go ahead and expand my knowledge in that area.

Ivie Osagie: Um, my name is Ivie Osagie and educationally speaking, I like to focus on chemistry and like on day to day I like to read in like as they said, open myself up because I feel like it opens you to different worlds and different authors and everybody else's minds.

Aja Jackson: I'm Aja Jackson and I like um, biology. So like I want to like get to know like more things that are related in that area because I wanted to go into the medical field so I went to get a better knowledge of that.

Alison Valk: So is anybody wanting to go to Tech at some point? Anybody interested in going to Tech?

Jumoke Ogunsola: Um, I, um, I am trying to go into the more medical type field but tech at what to actually get into that too. So if there's any way that we can merge that together in my future career, that would be amazing. Very cool. Yeah. I was thinking about probably going there, I was thinking about that.

Alison Valk: So we've got some potential future jackets. So, uh, so maybe tell me a little bit about this project that you worked on with the baseball launcher and, and what was maybe the most interesting or part of it maybe what was the most challenging part of it for you?

Jumoke Ogunsola: More challenges could be like there was different parts where you might have forgotten the certain bolt here is you to take the whole thing. It was many times we just have to take it all down and they started up again. It was, it was fun because like there was more the more social parts of it and teamwork and um, educational even like mathematics and stuff like that being tied into it. So it was definitely experience for all of us and it, it um, it was good as a, as a group to experience together.

Alison Valk: Learned a little bit about how to work in teams.

Jumoke Ogunsola: Exactly. Exactly.

Ivie Osagie: And I feel like the most challenging part was just trying to start because we were also young and like when we came we actually got together and we actually started, it was just a bag of bolts and wooden parts that were like not put together. So we like, we've never seen anything like that before. And then the teachers are like, okay, here are your blueprints. Everybody paired with somebody pick what part you want to build first and go. And it's like, okay, you're looking at these blueprints and they're confusing and you're trying to follow everything and put bolts together. And then um, Jumoke said if something was wrong he had to take the whole thing apart because it's like we weren't professionals or anything. So it was like trial and error as we went.

Alison Valk: You had to start over almost every time. It's like trial and error. It's like deconstruct the whole thing and then start back over. Oh, I don't know if I hadn't had the patience for that. You guys are good.

Aja Jackson: I'm Aja Jackson and I'm kinda like we said like, I think like the hardest part for me I guess would be like, like looking at the instructions and doing exactly what it says to do because like she said, it was like a bunch of pieces and you didn't know what to do with them. You had to like lay everything out and have everything organized.

Alison Valk: Like you really had to have patience, right? Yeah.

Ivie Osagie: It wasn't really a hard part for me. Not exactly, but being one of the historians we had to um, I had to be very organized and we had to type up our papers and everything and we had to make documentations of what we did every day and made sure that we've got everybody's signatures. So it was just a lot to remember.

Alison V.: Okay. So That's interesting. So it sounds like there was different roles project, so you were a historian, you can't control them.

Jumoke Ogunsola: I was in eighth grade at the time, so I was actually a facilitator and I was also helping with the thing and um, some of the art that is actually on this tosser. I was helping with that too.

Ivie Osagie: Okay. Things easier. So. And I was in seventh grade so I was like a builder and the builders are like the main people who put the. Um.

Alison Valk: So you got it. You were looking at blueprints.

Aja Jackson: Aja Jackson. I was also a better. So there was multiple builders and how many people were on the team? Is it, was it just you for or was there other people? It was about like,

Jumoke Ogunsola: I'm from Jumoke Ogunsola, yes. By like 10, 12 people, something like that.

Alison Valk: Okay. Okay. That was a fairly big group. That's like a, that takes a lot of effort to coordinate that many people, I imagine. Yeah. And once your teacher acting as sort of like the mentor for this group kind of helping teachers actually. Gotcha. Gotcha. Okay. So all right. You talked about your challenges and the roles was there. If you had to name one thing that was like the most fun part of it or the most enlightening part of it, what would that be?

Jumoke Ogunsola: Oh, do you? Jumoke Ogunsola? Um, I would say the dedication part of it because there was times where, um, you know, taking it down and stuff like that. And did they get a little frustrating. But then when we did here, um, maybe like mid towards the project and we were like, they were saying, oh, you can go ahead and get one from Georgia tech. That's totally fine. Then you'll just go ahead and use that for the competition. We were like, Nah, we gotten this far. So we're going ahead and make this, make this ourselves. We're going to add a little art. We're going to make this our own. So then we got there and then there was some things that were already prebuilt and stuff, but we knew that we made that ourselves. So if there anything went wrong, then we knew that was us. But it was, the whole experience was even beyond that. We knew that um, he put our blood, sweat and tears into it. So that was, it was amazing.

Ivie Osagie: The best part is like when all the individual pieces were done and we got to put the whole thing together and then we went out to the field and we started doing our trial stuff and like actually launching the ball and try and make sure it's consistent and figuring out how to launch it. And it was just like, that was the best part because it was like finally like what we're doing actually saying. Okay.

Alison Valk: Did you, did you test it here some or did you test it? Like, I know I said something in the article about you guys going to the CRC, but did you do a lot of

trial beforehand before you actually went out? So who came up with the idea of the, uh, the star wars was,

Jumoke Ogunsola: that was, that was the seventh. Our seventh graders. Then the guys, when you're thinking of themes and stuff and they're like, oh, we should do star wars stories. And you're like, okay. It was, it was, um, the dates that they actually lined up, so we were a little sad about that, but it didn't matter because it was supposed to be may the fourth when we go ahead and have the competition, we didn't go to like may the fifth or something like that, but that we had the star wars to say may the fourth be with you.

Alison Valk: That was very smart. That was nice. I liked it. Does anybody got a favorite star wars movie out of all the whole thing?

Jumoke Ogunsola: Rogue One was so far

Alison Valk: Yeah, that was a pretty good one. Yeah. Yeah. So does anybody have any heroes?

Jumoke Ogunsola: We're role models that they would like to talk about. My mom, she's a big role model for me because when I was younger and stuff like that, that she used to always be really dedicated and sit down at the table with me, helping me with my homework and stuff like that. And she may not know the answer to every question, but she tries her best and I appreciate that.

Alison Valk.: That's great. I feel the same way about my mom.

Funmilayo Ogunsola: Same, yeah, same thing for me. We have the same mom for her whole, she really motivates me to be more dedicated what I'm doing because I know where she works really hard at what she does. Um, and it helps to benefit me so the least I can do is help benefit myself so much to have less, you know, grief for her when she tries to go grow older and you know, I'll take care of her as she took care of me and all that stuff, you know, she really like, motivates me to help me get good grades because I want to make her proud and stuff. That's awesome.

Ivie Osagie: Second, and for me it was um, it was my dad because like ever since day one he's been grinding me to make sure that I do well and always on the top of my class. And it's just like you never want to disappoint, disappoint your parents and you always want to like show that like everything you've done for me, this is how I'm repaying you. But like, you being proud and you were able to come to these awards and clap and see me get on stage and stuff and like as I said, like I can get older and like not have problems, just like get any job I want, be able to do what I want to do when I'm older,

Aja Jackson: Aja Jackson, I'm also my mom because she's always like, felt like she's always been like no more supportive. Like if no one else was behind me, like my mom was behind me. Like she's always helped me with my homework and stuff. All

my sleep always made me feel like, like keep, keep at it. Like don't give up. You have to work hard in order to accomplish your goals.

Alison Valk: That's awesome. Yeah. Persistence is a lot of it thing. It's like keeping on. So tell me a little bit about, um, the braves game, like, and what, what happened there when you took it out and you got to throw out the first pitch? Does anybody want to tell me about what happened at the braves game?

Jumoke Ogunsola: It was, um, I mean, being that don't know much about. Oh, I didn't know much about baseball. I'm the game itself was pretty cool. I mean it started raining and stuff like that, so then they had to stop the game and it was pretty moist and all that stuff. But beforehand when we go ahead and clap tosser, then Arabs like, oh yeah, go to school. Yeah. And then we went ahead, put it on the field. They say let her rip and stuff and I shot the ball. We were like, oh my God. And you went back into the stands. You were like, oh my God. So amazing. I can't believe that actually worked. And he's. Yeah, it was, it was great. So

Funmilayo Ogunsola: from Funmilayo Ogunsola, we just felt very accomplished that we were able to get that far. I'm with the baseball launching a second.

Ivie Osagie: I felt like it was just like, like finally, like everything we did and then the winning the winning team is the team that got to go to the brain. So we had already knew that we had won against the competition and we were already excited and like you just see these eager kids coming onto to the field with their. But they're a tomahawk shirts on. It was just like, yeah,

Alison Valk: a lot of the whole team go. Or was it like your class and it was the whole class invited.

Ivie Osagie: Everyone was invited. I think it was just insanely busy.

Alison Valk: And so was there, I know at that competition over at the CRC. So you guys were the winners was there, um, what were, who were the other finalists and did, did you get to meet him? Did you make any connections with your, with other teams at all or meet anyone? That's.

Ivie Osagie: It was a lot of hustle and bustle actually. So I mean we didn't really get to interact much. We were just trying to get everyone get to a place so that we could, you have to at the right time and all that stuff. So it wasn't really much interaction. But we did see some of the other teams. Not really much talk.

Funmilayo Ogunsola: We're moving between a Funmilayo Ogunsola and moving between both rooms like, um, with the testing room and a room where we had the interview interview us, agreed it was more like we were all just so ready to actually compete, so it was more. And then when we got in there to present and then we came back into the gym and everybody's looking at their launcher and testing it out. So it wasn't so much of interaction. And then when they

announced the winners, it wasn't like there was a runner up or like anything, it was just like, oh, the team. That one was cool. Okay. Can we go to school? Okay. Now it's time to go bye.

Alison Valk: Is there, if you were wanting to give other kids some advice, like having gone through this experience and what you learned from it and uh, and that kind of thing, what might you give other, other kids your age? What advice would you give them? Um, in terms of approaching projects like this?

Jumoke Ogunsola: Um, I would say that, well, first off, what I would have headed, um, saw this whole club and everything. Then I was like, okay, maybe this would maybe benefit me in the long run actually did, so, um, it teaches you to go ahead and listen to other people's opinions because there was other things where, um, where you might not might be a little stubborn and then somebody says something, you're like, oh, I like my idea better to do that, but um, it teaches you to go ahead and stay more open-minded and be more dedicated towards one thing. And um, yeah, just different stuff like that. So then any opportunity that you see an opportunity like this, I would say someone to just go ahead and grab it and don't hesitate.

Funmilayo Ogunsola: Like I might've said. Um, it's a good opportunity just to open yourself up to different things. How I was thinking about in the beginning when I saw that we were having a baseball competition, how's it all? I don't know anything about baseball, but he's probably fun to do. So I just decided to try to do and everything and it really helped me to learn how to stay organized and everything as well.

Ivie Osagie: Second, I feel like my advice would be like determination and persistence is key because like there'd be, we've been working on it for months and there'd be days like after school I'd be tired and not want to come to practice, but like, you know, I know that as soon as we finish this I'm going to be proud of what I did and like already had schoolwork on top of everything. So it was just like if you don't want to do something, don't do it. And then if you do want to do something like be the best at it, Pour, pour your heart into and actually want to do it. Right.

Aja Jackson: Asian Jackson, I'm kind of like a joke. I said I like how she said we should be more open minded about it and like definitely like in this project you really learn your team's team working skills. Like you really had to work together in order to accomplish this big goal. And then. And we were all like proud in the end. Like we were so happy. Like yes, I finally made it like after all these staying, staying after school and all that and testing and testing, like you finally made it in the end. So like it was always a good experience.

Alison Valk: It's kind of a good feeling when you're with a group of people and you've kind of collectively succeed. It means more because everybody brought something to the table and, and this was kind of a long time. So it sounds like you guys worked on this whole thing for months.

Aja Jackson: You started around like late November, early November and then we went into May. So yeah.

Alison Valk: Was it every day after school or was it like certain days? Mondays and Wednesdays when it got added that close to the competition, we had to extend the time. Did anybody else want to, did they have anything to say about the project? Do you have anything you'd like to share or tell anyone?

Jumoke Ogunsola: I would say for anything like this, um, as the, the whole teamwork thing, then I'm being that we had a big group that we made sure that everybody was engaged. So I will just say that if you were ever in a bigger group, big group like we were in, in, in a club, then just try to just get in where you fit in type thing. So anywhere that you've seen someone might need help and there's always something that you can do. So just go ahead and try to, um, just go, just do whatever you can to, um, help the team because it helps you feel good at the end when you go ahead and if you succeed and you're like, okay, I did this. So I helped. So yay. So definitely. Oh yeah.

Funmilayo O.: And some more advices that, um, you should just like keep going and like open yourself up to different things. Like at first you may think that one task might be hard to do, so you may feel like quitting, but in the long run it's all going to be worth in the end because you got to feel accomplished.

Alison V.: Going to hit some hurdles, but you just got to keep going somehow.

Aja Jackson: Aja Jackson, I think like what thing I liked about this project was like, it wasn't just about the builders are, it wasn't just about this story, it's like everybody's role was important. Like we all, like, even if it wasn't like even if you weren't building like I think like for like the presentation, everyone was included. Like you, like everyone's role was important in the end. Like it wasn't just about certain people.

Alison V.: That's a good lesson for any job. You have lots of the case. It's never a solo effort. It's always everybody working together for sure. I agree with you.

Ivie Osagie: Like everybody had a role and everybody had a part in like no part was too small or too big, like every. Everybody was important. Everybody was appreciated in the end. So important.

Alison V.: Did y'all have a celebration like outside of the braves game at all? Does anybody. Was there any big celebration at the end? It was nice to say, yeah, you got to celebrate how many going to magnet schools or high schools.

Jumoke Ogunsola: Yeah, I'm in club high school. I am part of the academy research or medical sciences magnet program there.

Alison V.: And what grade was that? Um, I was in. I'm going to sophomore year next year, so. Gotcha.

Aja Jackson: Um, I'm still cooking middle school. Okay. I'm, I'm a rising freshmen,

Jumoke Ogunsola: a rising ninth grader. I'm going to Kennesaw Mountain, the magnet program there for stem, the science, technology, engineering and math.

Funmilayo Ogunsola: Um, I'm going to be a part of the self cop. I'm, I'm a rising freshman in a medical magnet program.

Alison Valk: Gotcha. Do you think being a part of this helped you get into magnet?

Jumoke Ogunsola: Yeah, definitely think so. Um, being that I only have one year there, um, we always say that, you know, freshman year, that's the whole testing, the waters type year. So I did get a little taste of what the whole year whole, my whole high school experience is going to be like and the whole, I'm just persuading myself really to go ahead and try to get into a certain task and go through with it. Then that's this whole club really helped me with that was

Ivie Osagie: okay, good. Even if I like, it was really good because this was just like a abstract project, like you don't do these type of projects while you're in school, so it was a good opportunity and like when you go and you apply for these different programs and stuff, it's nice to have something that really makes you stand out. Like I was a part of this big Georgia institute of Georgia tech like projects and I got to build a baseball launcher and then to say that we won the competition and even further from that we got to go and do that. It just makes you stand out better for everybody else.

Alison Valk: Well, good luck you guys. I know you're going to do that. Awesome. I guess that's it. I guess we can switch over to you now and you can sort of tell the teacher perspective on all of this. Okay. Um, so maybe you can, um, the students talked a little bit about their perspective on the project. Maybe you can talk a little bit about the project and how you got involved in that kind of thing.

Stephanie Ruffner: Okay. So Stephanie Ruffner. I was, I'm the assistant teacher and as part of this project, so crystal mast was kind of the lead instructor of the project. She worked with Georgia tech and I'm learning about the project. They reached out to her to be a part of it and then she pulled me on board to assist so it was, you know, staying afterschool long hours. Um, but I, I love working on these types of projects with our students and with our stem academy and everything. Um, and I love to see them working together and just everything that they said, the perseverance and the trial and error. And these are, these are life skills really. It's not, it's not about the academics at this point. It's about learning those life skills that are really going to help them stand out and be able to work as a team and work together. Um, so that's what I enjoy seeing the most. I like just sitting



back and watching them and you know, it's, it's a social aspect, you know, but there's a lot of playing and talking and having fun, but at the same time they're trying to solve a problem and you know, out in the real world and the workforce, people don't want individuals to be able to identify problems. They want people to solve the problems and that's, you know, what this type of project does. It does. It teaches then how to go about problem solving.

Alison Valk: Yeah. It seems like it builds community too, like while you're trying to solve these problems and kind of learn a little bit about each other as well.

Stephanie Ruffner: We definitely did not have the answers. I had never built a baseball launcher. I didn't build one this time. I didn't know all of the parts and all of the mechanics or how it works or how to read the blueprint. So we were right alongside them learning, um, you know, in facilitating the learning process for everybody, including the instructors.

Alison Valk: So tell me a little bit more about you. Where were you born and where did you grow up and how did you end up at Duke?

Stephanie Ruffner: So, um, funny enough, I actually was born here and hostile, um, and I didn't know that actually until I didn't realize it I guess until I had moved back here, but I grew up, um, in Peachtree city, Georgia. And then I went to Columbus State University in Columbus, Georgia and met my husband there and we lived there, tie in Columbus, Georgia for about five years and then moved up here to Cobb county and got the job here at Cooper. And so I've been here for five years now.

Alison Valk: Do you teach multiple grades or just one grade or.

Stephanie Ruffner: I am secondary math certified. So I was hired here at Cooper to help build the stem academy as the high school math teacher. So I was specifically hired for this position to teach the Algebra one to the eighth grade students. However, I do also, I have taught the seventh grade, the sixth grade on grade level eighth grade. So I've taught a little bit of everything. And then, um, when I was in Columbus, Georgia, I taught high school, so I taught everything from Algebra to calculus, so I've taught a little bit of everything math wise.

Alison Valk: So, uh, what are your interests and hobbies? I've asked the students with their interests and hobbies are, what are yours? What do you do? I guess outside of work that's enriching?

Stephanie Ruffner: Um, I am a bit of a workaholic, so my hobbies generally doing clued, I'm kind of nerdy, stem-y kind of stuff. Um, so I enjoy going to conferences and learning new things, but hobby wise I like to be with friends and hang out. I would say my hobbies are shopping, any kind of shopping, really window shopping and I'll have to buy anything. I could just walk around all day long and just look at stuff and it's wonderful. And sleeping is another hobby of mine. So any chance I get to take a nap, um, that is my preferred activity

Alison Valk: Teachers, but it's always one of their favorite hobbies.

Stephanie Ruffner: I have a two-year-old and a four-year-old. So playing with them, being with families, what I really love to do. Okay,

Alison Valk: Do you have any heroes or mentors? Or was there a significant person in your life or event that has shaped who you are?

Stephanie Ruffner: Yes, so when I was in third grade, I had actually failed twice. Um, I was going to fail for a third time and when they finally tested me for learning disabilities and so this was a push from my third grade math and science teacher that she really helped my parents get the right connections to getting, um, special needs testing for me and found out that I was ADD, ADHD and severely dyslexic. And because I was already two years behind, uh, they worked with the school and my parents and I actually skipped, I guess this was actually fourth grade, so third to fourth grade. I actually skipped fifth grade, um, and went into sixth grade within the special education department. I'm in sixth grade. I cannot read past a second grade reading level. And so sixth, seventh and eighth grade I got assistance through the school and, um, actually was able to improve enough to not need special assistance anymore. I'm coming out of eighth grade and so that teacher, without her push, I would not be where I am today. And when they came up with the diagnosis, they told my parents, said I would probably be lucky to graduate from high school and that I would never succeed in college, that I just, I wouldn't be able to do it. And so, um, but I just took. No, that wasn't an option. Um, so I just, it was something I wanted to do when, so I just kind of pushed through it. Um, I still don't like to read. I do read because I know that I have to keep, I bumped that skill, but it is not something that comes naturally, comes easy for me because that's where my deficit is. But um, I do like to tell my students that so like at the beginning of every school year because I misspell stuff on the board all the time and you know, and I'd just tell them, you know, this is how it is. You can get through any difficulties and you know, correct me, we'll move right along. It's not a big deal. So that would be a defining moment for me. And then, um, that was Ms. Lemons in sixth grade or fourth grade. And then in high school I had a math teacher that I'm kind of geared me in the direction of math, um, but as a role model and just like, um, all of my wonderful students that have said my parents definitely have been big supporters for me for getting me the help that I needed, but also always being there. They have five, I'm one of five kids and um, so they just always there for all of us.

Alison Valk: One person can make a difference in someone's life and um, I think that's a perfect example. One person can kind of steer you and help you overcome.

Stephanie Ruffner: And that's definitely my goal as a teacher. If anybody learns anything from me, you know, I just, I want to make a difference in somebody's life. Whether I know it or not, it doesn't matter, but that, that is my goal. Yes, I teach math, but at the end of the day, that's not what I'm trying to teach my kids, that it's. And I say my kids because they are my kids, you know, once they're in my room, they are my kids and um, and it's being there for them and showing them that they can do it

and they can push through their challenges and just being there to change their lives is my goal.

Alison Valk: Just keep going. You can overcome any hurdles for sure. So you've talked a little bit about sort of how you got involved in the baseball launch your project. Did you have favorite parts of the project or your or challenges or aspects about the project that really stood out to you?

Stephanie Ruffner: Um, I think definitely getting the final pieces put together was a defining moment for us and that was very exciting. I'm getting the actual trigger to work was, was complicated and frustrating. That's one of the pieces we had to take over and turn around. And um, so once we finally figured out what we had to do and we were communicating back and forth with the engineers at Georgia tech and say, this is not working your plans are not right? Well, yeah, I mean we video skyped, we, you know, called in and I'm so we finally were able to get it working and so that was a defining moment in seeing their presentation come together was my other one. I think they did a great job with the presentation and they put together this awesome skit that just kind of gave you a snapshot of what the whole experience was and it turned out fantastic.

Stephanie Ruffner: Oh, was like a live skit reenacting

Aja Jackson: how everything went with the team. Somebody acted as the teacher of being frustrated with the whole project. Okay, we got to get these parts together and then some people were their students and then it showed like our trial and run. I mean I try and run errors are errors in there. It showed 'em what we did to overcome those.

Alison Valk: Oh, very nice. Oh, that's a, that's a creative way of doing it because a lot of times you know, you just, you maybe it's just a video or a report or something like this, but doing the kind of live action thing is a creative idea with that. Whose idea with that was that Mr me,

Stephanie Ruffner: I had seen it at a different competition and so we were just kind of throwing out ideas and then I threw out the idea that I've seen it before where they did their presentation as a skit and then they ran with it and they came up with the parts, so I might've given the little bug of an idea, but they really came up with the whole skit and ran with it. And I think that's, I think that's probably what helped us push over the edge to winning, winning the competition, our lau-, our baseball launcher, you know, didn't really well and was pretty accurate. But um, I think the presentation was the final.

Alison Valk: How did they measure it? Received those things. I was actually, I was trying to visualize that. Do they?

Ivie Osagie: Okay. So there was like there everybody stood at a certain, each school went one at a time while other schools like practiced or deal with or wanting to do on

the other side of the gym. So when it was your turn, your launcher is at a certain area, like behind a line. And then they put a bucket and like they was like, this is your target, so you need to hit around the bucket or into the bucket. So while we were doing our practicing on the field, one of the good things about our launcher is what is that it was consistent. So if we were able to get really close to the target and then just have it stayed there, we would be good. So when we launched the first, when we actually got like right next to the bucket and then you put, they put like a post it note there and now we launched it again and like bounced off of the end and then hit it again and then that was like really consistent and then it will all are like we got, you got three times to hit the ball, throw the, launch the ball. So it was like they put post it notes and then after they saw like who is the closest at being able to aim at the target. And then that's how the dude's married.

Alison Valk: Gotcha. Did you ever get it in the bucket or reading?

Stephanie Ruffner: Pretty. Just always on the edge, bounced off the rim of the bucket, but the fact that they were all pretty accurate and then at the same point and the persistency and accuracy which goes along with their math standards and things like that. So I tied in a lot to what they were learning, but the fact that they could kind of hit that same point, that was something that I don't think any of the other schools did and that was something that the students, I think learned from their trial and error is that once they figured out kind of where to set the angle, don't mess with it too much because a lot of the other schools I think kind of changed their angles dramatically, which affected their accuracy.

Alison Valk: That's interesting. Have a. How have your interactions with these technologies are research initiatives affected your work or personal life? Is there anything you think of differently or anything you approach differently as a result of these sorts of projects?

Stephanie Ruffner: Um, I definitely think it affects the way that I instruct my class. Um, a lot of my attempts, at least however I'm successful they might be, is to make my students do more problem solving and kind of figuring it out for themselves. Um, and a lot of that is due to the challenges that I know that they're going to face in the rural world, but doing these competitions and doing these projects have, I'll give them the initial information and the background of what they need, but kind of when they get stuck they know that they can go to each other and they go to their resources and, you know, and when they need me, I'm there to help. But I think a lot of times they tend to go to each other first or go to their resources and um, and that comes from my experiences with these types of projects and seeing how effective it is with their team working communication skills. So sometimes they get frustrated or maybe don't see that goal that I have for them of myth, making them work individually and independently. Um, but that, that definitely has shaped the way that I instruct my class.

Alison Valk: Is there anything further you'd like to share or things, something that really stands out to you about this project that you'd like to share with us?

Stephanie Ruffner: So, um, I think it was a really great project in giving the students some experience of how they can use skills that they're learning in school, outside of school. A lot of times there's a disconnect between what they're learning in the classroom and how it actually applies out in the real world or were they ever going to use this and you know, maybe there's small components that they've made connections with now going through this project that they wouldn't have seen if they hadn't done this. You know, we as teachers, we're so crammed for time to get through material and get through the content and there's so many things that we want to be able to show them, but time just doesn't allow to us to show them those connections. So by having this type of a project for them to work on, gives them that outside experience. Um, it gives them the experience of going onto a college campus and what their future could look like. You know, going to a university and, and kind of starting to envision what their possibilities are

Alison Valk: Are they pose their plans for any sort of similar type contract like this in the future or do you?

Stephanie Ruffner: So with the um, Cooper STEM Academy, we actually do, um, competitions and projects year round. This happened to be one of the projects that we did as an afterschool program for the students, but the students that were involved in this competition are involved in stem projects throughout the entire year by being in the stem academy. So they have an engineering class every single day where we have done various projects similar to this, such as the future Lego league robotics competition, which this past year we, um, advanced to the state level of the robotics competition which was actually held at Georgia Tech. So that was another experience that our students, um, were able to go onto the campus and, and use the resources and things like that. We've also done future cities. We do, um, fluid power machines with the national fluid power association. We have our aquaponics lab that we've been building. I'm hearing, um, so they're, and I'm in seventh grade, they do the water tower competitions and eighth and sixth grade they do a lot with soil and erosion and um, they did a kite build and so they, they have had experience with these engineering type things. This one might be a little bit more, um, in depth in some of the other ones that we've done, but we try to build in these projects, giving them different experiences with different types of challenges in

Alison Valk: In addition to the baseball launcher, Or ones that you guys like favorites projects that stand out since you were doing different projects?

Aja Jackson: What I think was the future city project because I'm in the select and the beginning of the year we all started out with robotics and like learning about the robots and programming with your partner. And then afterward, um, our stem teachers in eighth grade, they gave us a choice between continuing with robotics or switching over to future cities, what Ms. Faulkner. And so like it was like half and half of the stem academy. Some people doing robotics and other visit during future city. And with future city it was, um, you got this problem and you were supposed to create a city that catered toward that problem. So for

that year it was, um, for senior citizens. So like what, like new ideas and new inventions can you put in a city that caters toward senior citizens? And I was working with a team of three other students and it wasn't just like throwing random ideas out there, there was like library time where we researched and put stuff together and we had citations and we had to do an essay and then when we actually got to the building portion, we actually built our city and put everybody's ideas together. And then it was really in like, it wasn't like, just like paper and like glue, it was like actual, like hot glue. But it's over there. We put the actually puts stuff together. So those are my favorite ones.

Alison Valk: And was there any, um, you were doing a city that was tailored for our elderly folks. What, what were some of those sort of things that you put into your city?

Aja Jackson: Um, my team, we focused on transportation as one of our problems that we had to fix, so instead of our roads being streets, they were like conveyor belts and so the senior citizens were in this dome and they would sit in the seats and then there'll be conveyor belts that acted the streets and they had stoplights and stuff and then they also had sidewalks along the side if they wanted to walk. And then inside the houses there had, um, they were like chair lifts where you could sit in the chair and then it would lift you up. And then we also focus a little bit on medication and there's these like shoots inside each house that like gave elderly their medications to take on time. So I didn't have to like go to the doctor every day. So it was just like different ideas. So is this

Alison Valk: Nice. I need some of those things around when I'm tired.

Aja Jackson: Aja Jackson. I also liked the future city project simply because like I think it was like you had to pick something like that's real, like in this world that actually affects other people, like, like my group that we work, that I work with, um, we focus on specifically like blind people. So we basically did like things that will like help them. Like one thing we had was like apartment buildings, so they all had like elevators and then like it had like the reading, so like they know where their room is and then also we had these stoplights that like, you know, like they can hear but they can't see it. So we had like, it was like one thing for red light, two for yellow light, stuff like that. So it's like helping.

Alison Valk: Very nice. Yeah. I'll definitely need you guys when I get old. I'll be calling you up for all these assistance technologies. Anybody else have any sort of projects you worked on that you'd like to share?

Funmilayo Oguniola: Uh, who? Meagan? Sheila, there was one that I did in sixth grade. Uh, it went on for a while. We had to build an underground shelter and shelter. Yeah. Uh, I really enjoyed that one because it used a lot of teamwork and everything and we had to and we had to limit the amount of supplies that we were able to use, so we just had to um, so we just had to work together and use what we had and it was like a lot of um, because a lot of the time we had like, we built like little small rooms and like we actually divided it with cardboard and then we actually

made like little bits, like I had to look up how to make Origami. Yes. Yeah. It was a fun experience though.

Alison Valk:

It sounds like a lot of these projects are all sort of teamwork focused. Like how are we gonna work together to sort of reach this end goal. That's really awesome you guys. Well, thank you for sharing your stories and your experiences and things like that. And thank you so much. Thank you.