

Dear Parents, Educators, Guardians and Mentors:

Do you remember how it feels to be told by someone you admire that they believe in you, and that you can achieve anything?

We all have dreams growing up – whether it is to play the guitar, create meaningful art, or become an astronaut. No matter what you imagine, belief in oneself is nothing short of life changing.

These days, though, many American children are learning to doubt themselves because of fear or shame from the judgement of others. It holds them back from exploring their interests, passions, and potential at a formative age. Sometimes, and often by accident, children are made to feel like they aren't good enough or the "right kind of kid" for a certain academic or extracurricular – negatively impacting their self-worth for a lifetime. In fact, a recent survey found when it comes to extracurriculars in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), 29% of kids agree they don't feel smart enough to join a STEM-related program, despite 54% of students saying that they did or would want to join a STEM extracurricular to learn a new skill.



We've seen firsthand the power of STEM education to inspire the innovative spirit and self-esteem our kids need to tackle some of the world's greatest challenges. As we begin the school year, tell the young people in your life they **can** join the club everyone says is "too hard" or "not for girls"; they **can** say "yes" to opportunities outside their comfort zone; they **can** be more than what they seem.

The recent passage of the bipartisan CHIPS and Science Act, a bill that will strengthen America's place as a global leader in science and technology, creates even more momentum for us to foster innovation and problem solving for kids everywhere.

Expand their **choices**. Expand their **STEM**. Expand their **esteem**.

Join us in helping millions of young people discover the path to achieving their dreams.

*By Chris Moore, CEO of FIRST® and
Alyssa Carson, Aquanaut and aspiring Astronaut*