

From Drive to Survive to Data Science: National Survey from Superprof Shows Pop Culture Is Rewriting the STEM Playbook

New survey of 500+ U.S. tutors finds pop culture is outpacing the classroom as the #1 on-ramp to student STEM curiosity

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Pop culture has become one of the most powerful ways to spark student interest in STEM, offering a new kind of on-ramp that complements what happens in the classroom. According to a new national survey from [Superprof](#), the world's largest tutoring network, 71% of tutors have seen an increase in students

seeking STEM tutoring connected to a cultural moment or media trend in the past two years. The survey, conducted in June 2026 among 504 U.S.-based tutors, offers a ground-level look at how entertainment, sports, and social media are reshaping student curiosity in STEM, and how tutors are racing to meet it.

The logo for Superprof, featuring the word "superprof" in a bold, red, lowercase sans-serif font with a white outline, set against a light gray background.

The data points to a set of fast-moving cultural forces driving this shift.

- AI is the top spark, cited by 61% of tutors, followed by gaming (48%) and viral science content on social media (46%)
- 85% of tutors say pop culture and media have shaped what students say they want to do professionally — from aspiring data scientists inspired by fantasy sports to students drawn to engineering after watching their favorite gaming creators break down how virtual worlds are built
- Tutors surveyed primarily work with high schoolers (62%) and middle schoolers (50%), with nearly half also working with college-age students (46%)

"What this data confirms is something tutors have known on the ground for years: culture and real-world applications are creating STEM curiosity at a scale no curriculum could replicate," said Wilfried Granier, CEO of Superprof. "The opportunity is real, but so is the gap. Superprof exists to

connect students with the right tutor at exactly the moment that curiosity strikes, so that a sparked interest becomes a lasting skill."

Converting cultural curiosity into academic progress is where the work gets complicated, with tutors identifying three core challenges in making the translation stick.

- 35% say their top challenge is bridging the gap between the pop culture version of STEM and actual academic rigor
- 29% say matching the right curriculum to a student's specific interest is the hardest part
- 21% say keeping momentum going once the novelty wears off is their biggest obstacle

That challenge extends beyond individual sessions with nearly half of tutors saying traditional K-12 curriculum still falls short of connecting STEM to real-world or culturally relevant contexts.

"One of the most memorable breakthroughs I've had as a tutor involved a student who loved Formula 1 racing but showed little interest in math class, so I had him dig into how F1 teams use data to shave time off their laps, calculating averages and interpreting graphs along the way," said Tayyab Bibi, a Superprof tutor. "Realizing that a fraction of a second could decide a race changed everything for him, and he began building his own spreadsheets to track race data on his own time, turning his passion for F1 into stronger grades and genuine confidence in his abilities."

The stakes of successfully making this connection are highest for groups that schools have historically struggled to retain in STEM. When asked which student populations benefit most from real-world and pop culture hooks, 39% of tutors pointed to younger students and 31% identified girls and young women. Those figures take on added weight given that 79% of tutors say they always or often intentionally incorporate real-world and pop culture contexts into their sessions, making this an active, deliberate practice rather than an informal workaround. Eighty-one percent believe real-world context is a more powerful motivator than grades or test scores.

To find a tutor who meets students where their curiosity lives or to join the world's largest tutoring network and share your own expertise, visit www.superprof.com.

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