

Gifted Colombia kids pay tribute to hero Hawking

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Gifted children at the Stephen Hawking school in Colombia's capital Bogota have been paying a special tribute to the astrophysicist whose life inspired them to study science.

Students have covered walls of the [school](#) with drawings, photographs and cards in memory of the wheelchair-bound Hawking, who died Wednesday aged 76.

The school named after Hawking was founded in 1995 by a group of teachers committed to helping children with low resources but high IQs.

Dora Pardo, who runs the school, said several past pupils have gone on to study physics and mathematics at university.

"Hawking couldn't move but his incapacity didn't deter him, and he was one of the people who knew most about space without having been there," 16-year-old Juan Esteban Lopez, a [pupil](#), told AFP.

Catalina Sanchez, another adolescent moved by Hawking's death, said students at the school consult short films, plays and books by or about the scientist on a daily basis.

Every year, the pupils at the school mark the British astrophysicist's birthday on January 8 with a science festival, but they want to go further.

"We want to be his spokespersons," said Sanchez, adding that they would

visit other secondary schools to help [children](#) understand that Hawking "helped us to learn more about the universe."

Hawking defied predictions that he would only live for a few years after developing a form of [motor neurone disease](#) in his early 20s.

Propelled to stardom by his 1988 book "A Brief History of Time," an unlikely worldwide bestseller, Hawking's genius and wit won over fans from far beyond the rarefied world of astrophysics.

As a scientist he earned comparisons with Albert Einstein and Isaac Newton.

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