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STEM
EDUCATION & LEADERSHIP



December 2025

STEMtastic NEWS

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
K-12 STEM



Calling All STEM Reviewers!
Your Support is Greatly Appreciated

The 2025-2026 North Carolina STEM Schools of Distinction Recognition Program is underway. With over **40** schools across the state having communicated their Intent to be recognized as a leading STEM program in North Carolina, we are asking for STEM educational leaders, who have familiarity with the STEM Schools of Distinction process, to assist with the Peer Review of this year's applications. Individuals presently leading within a NC recognized STEM school, or any individuals who have served as past SSoD reviewers, are asked to provide updated contact information by completing this [Reviewer Application](#) by **December 20th**.

All reviewers participate in an online training module prior to assignment. More information on this training will be available soon. This year's application submissions will be shared mid-January and reviewers will have two weeks to complete their individual review and share feedback. The number of reviewers assigned will be dependent upon the final number of schools submitting applications.

Thank you for continuing to support high-quality STEM education in North Carolina!

STEM Reviewer Application

Back by popular demand!

Growing Success for MLs and The Standards Academy

**Save the 2026
Summer
Conference
Dates!**

**Face to Face
June 23 - 25**
*Cleveland High School
1892 Polenta Road,
Clayton NC 27520*

**Virtual
July 13 - 16**

High-quality, Research-
based Sessions

Statewide Collaboration
and Networking

Alignment and
Consistency

Experts from across the
State and NCDPI



**STANDARDS
ACADEMY 2026**





THOMAS EDISON PITCH CONTEST

By Edison Innovation Foundation

If you've ever wanted your students to try an invention challenge that feels creative, doable, and actually fun to run, this is the one. [Registration for the Thomas Edison Pitch Contest is now open!](#)

Teams create an invention that solves a real problem, submit a short idea video in January, and compete for awards that

celebrate creativity, curiosity, and problem-solving.

This year's contest is built to be easier to start and more exciting to finish. You can choose the build path that fits your students and compete for new awards that recognize creativity at every level. It's the most flexible version of the contest we've ever run.

If you want something engaging that fits into a busy classroom and gives students a real shot at being inventive, this is your moment.

**Register
Now**

DNCR Resources

Journaling the Journey: Helping Students Find Wonder in Nature



What happens when students take their learning beyond the classroom and into the natural world? At Martin Innovative Middle School, DNCR Teacher Ambassador Landon Leggett discovered that the [North Carolina Kids' Exploration Journal](#), a free DNCR resource, sparked student curiosity and transformed everyday outdoor moments into powerful learning experiences.

[Read the Full Blog for Inspiration](#)

[Request Journals for Your Classroom](#)

Save the Date: 2026 Science for All Summit



Mark your calendars for the [2026 Science for All Summit](#), happening February 19–20, 2026, at the Friday Conference Center in Chapel Hill, NC. Hosted by [Morehead Planetarium and Science Center](#), this statewide convening brings together educators, researchers, and STEM leaders to advance access and opportunity in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics for all learners.

The Summit will feature keynote speakers, workshops, breakout sessions, and networking opportunities focused on equity, innovation, and inclusive practices in STEM education.

[Learn More and Join the Mailing List](#)

Learning Happens Here Field Trip Fund



The [Learning Happens Here Field Trip Fund](#) reimburses public and public charter schools for field trips to [100+ DNCB](#)

locations across North Carolina! The fund can cover costs such as:

- Transportation costs (including charter buses when needed)
- Admission or special activity fees (although many DNCR sites are free!)
- Substitute reimbursement (when necessary for the trip to take place)
- Meals for students who can't afford them.



Students from Lakewood Montessori Middle School in Durham County used their funds to visit Pilot Mountain and explore geology, observe hawk migration, and engage in nature journaling. *Photos courtesy of Sarah Walls.*

Impacts of the Fund So Far:

239

Schools Served

18,044

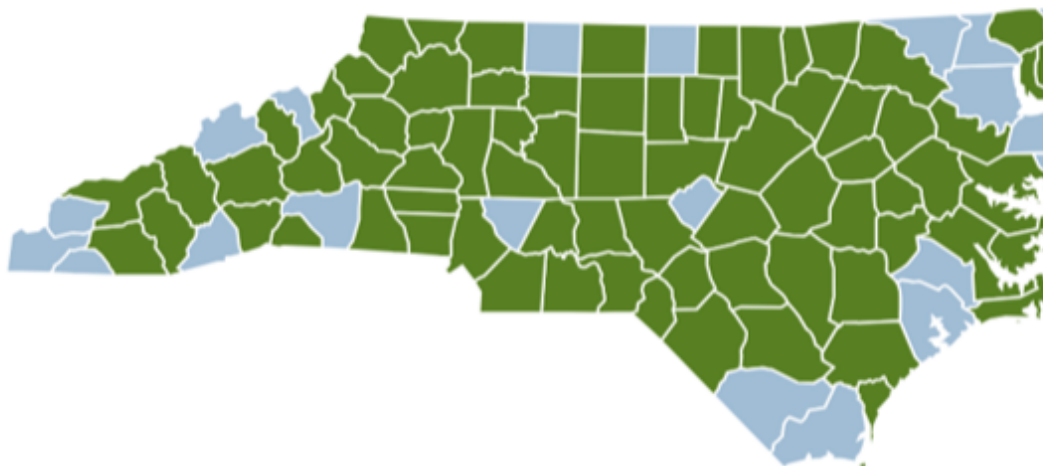
Students Impacted

\$575,574

Dollars Awarded

Counties Served

Counties shaded in green have already applied for and received funding. The Fund Committee is committed to reaching all 100 counties!



With an **acceptance rate for first-time applicants of 98%** and almost \$400,000 remaining to award, what are you waiting for? Create lasting memories for your students with the [Learning Happens Here Field Trip Fund](#). Our staff is available to assist with trip recommendations and the application process.

Need some inspiration? Search **#NCLearningHappensHere** on Instagram or Facebook to see lots of trips in action!

Field Trip Fund Information and Application



NSTA Award Applications and Nominations Open Until December 19

NSTA Awards celebrate outstanding science teachers for their accomplishments and dedication to science education with cash prizes, national recognition, and a reputation for innovation.

This is your chance to highlight the inspiring work happening in science classrooms. Start your application or nomination now!

Submission Deadline: December 19

**Get
Started**

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