

Tennessee STEM School Designation Process

Executive Summary

If Tennessee is to lead the nation in STEM industry growth, it is essential that the state adopt and promote robust STEM-based instruction utilizing Tennessee mathematics and science standards as the primary focus. The Tennessee STEM School Designation process moves Tennessee one step closer to closing the state's STEM skills gap by fostering innovative learning environments where students can thrive through their own innovation.

The Tennessee STEM School Designation process has been created with the future in mind and is a key priority in the state's STEM Strategic Plan. By providing a guide for quality STEM integration in schools across the state, more Tennessee students will have opportunities to thrive in learning environments that develop critical thinking skills, build collaboration, and provide students with experiences that build deeper knowledge in STEM content areas.

The Tennessee STEM School Designation process has been developed with the guidance of the Tennessee Department of Education and the STEM Leadership Council to identify and recognize schools in their commitment to teaching STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and integrating strategies that ultimately prepare for success in the 21st century. Learning from the state's early investments in STEM platform schools, such schools focus on employing inquiry, project and problem-based learning, community engagement, entrepreneurship, student-centered classrooms, and STEM enrichment activities. As such, these schools amplify existing STEM programming and recognizing schools for their STEM strategies and design principles will further position Tennessee for future educational and economic successes.

This process has been drafted in partnership with the Tennessee STEM Innovation Network to provide guidance for schools as they consider applying for the Tennessee STEM School Designation as referenced in the state's STEM Strategic Plan. The process documents and examples provide the critical priorities and attributes that comprise quality STEM teaching and learning environments and are required for comprehensive STEM school development.

The priorities in the designation process are aligned with the STEM Strategic Plan and are organized around five focus areas: *infrastructure, curriculum and instruction, professional development, achievement, and community and post-secondary partnerships*. The process provides an outline for the implementation of each STEM attribute, acting as a guide for schools interested in starting quality STEM programming in their schools, while pushing existing STEM programming to the next level to more fully engage *all* students in STEM learning. The criteria are provided for each attribute to describe an *Early, Developing, On Target, or an Accomplished* rating that will be compiled for a school to achieve the designation status.