



Academic Magnet High
School

For Immediate Release

April 23, 2025

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Media Release

Academic Magnet Students Win High School Division in NASA Plant the Moon Competition

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North Charleston, SC - Academic Magnet High School Physics Teacher and Coach, Maria Desbrow, and her [NASA Plant the Moon Challenge](#) team won first place in the "Evaluation of Results" high school division in the international competition. Their [paper](#) will be published on the international Plant the Moon Challenge website. They beat countries like South Korea, India, among many others, and states in the U.S. in their category. The program has seen widespread participation, attracting students from 44 states and 17 countries since its launch in 2021.

"I am proud of all the hard work that my students put into their projects," said Desbrow. "Their dedication paid off."

The NASA Plant the Moon Challenge is a global science experiment and educational initiative where students conduct experiments to see how vegetables can grow in lunar and Martian soil simulants. This project helps NASA understand how crops can be grown on the Moon and Mars, supporting the Artemis program and future human missions to the lunar surface and beyond.

Team members include:

- Aysegul Aygar (12th)
- Leah Bagg (11th)
- Alexandra Eastman (11th)
- Caitlin Farr (11th)
- Chloe Hwang (11th)
- Helina Lloyd (11th)
- Hannah McLaughlin (11th)
- Zavier Nutting (11th)
- Yamil Perez (11th)
- Luke Williams (11th)
- Yidong Ye (9th)
- Yiqing Ye (11th)

- Luke Zheltov (11th)

Students worldwide participate, collaborating on experiments to grow crops in lunar and Martian soil simulants. The challenge promotes STEM education by engaging students in hands-on experiments and research, fostering scientific inquiry and critical thinking. The challenge is a collaborative effort between NASA, educational institutions, and student groups to advance knowledge about growing crops in space.

Findings contribute to NASA's Artemis program, which aims to establish a sustained presence on the Moon and eventually explore Mars. Participants study how crops respond to the unique properties of lunar regolith (lunar soil) and other environmental factors. Students design and conduct experiments, collect data, and analyze results, engaging in a project-based learning experience. Participants use specially designed lunar and Martian soil simulants that mimic the physical and chemical properties of the lunar and Martian regolith.

The [South Carolina NASA Space Grant Consortium sponsors this project.](#)

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is a nationally accredited school district committed to providing equitable and quality educational opportunities for all its students. CCSD is the second-largest school system in South Carolina and represents a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools spanning 1,300 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves approximately 50,000 students in 88 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse portfolio of educational options and specialized programs delivered to the students of CCSD through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools and programs. Rich educational opportunities for students include programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; military; dual credit; and many more.

