



STEM GUIDELINES 2026



ECCA STEM Academy Program

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) is a national education movement designed to create critical thinking skills across disciplines, prepare students for science and math courses in college, and help communities stay competitive in a global economy. Evidence shows these schools and programs produce graduates with a deeper knowledge and a stronger passion for learning, particularly in science and mathematics. That knowledge and passion translate into much higher rates of college attendance and more students majoring in scientific and technical fields. The STEM Academy program at ECCA is designed to prepare students for success in post-secondary education, career, and citizenship. It is designed to appeal to students who seek a small-school approach to learning, where academic subjects are connected, and where students are engaged in rigorous science and mathematics content integrated with a STEM-themed pathway.

Criteria for Admission

Only students who are enrolled in Effingham County School District will be eligible for the application process. Current eighth grade students who meet the established criteria can apply into a lottery drawing for enrollment into the STEM Program. There are two rounds of lottery drawings prior to the start of school in August each year.

Due to possible changes in assessment requirements each year, the criteria for eligible STEM Program students is reviewed yearly and will be posted on the ECCA website by January 15th for the following school year. Students who are enrolled in any alternative school for discipline during eighth grade are not eligible to apply to the STEM Program. Any student who fails a course their eighth grade year will lose eligibility and/or forfeit their spot to attend the STEM Program. Course grades will be reviewed once posted to their transcript. If a student with Chronic Absenteeism is selected in the lottery, then the STEM administrators will defer to the 8th grade Hardship Committee decisions in order to determine final acceptance.

First Lottery

Students will be eligible for possible enrollment if they meet the criteria set for the given year by the Effingham County School District's Office of Curriculum and Technology. Eligible students who meet all areas of the eligibility requirements can apply for the first lottery.

Second Lottery

- **Siblings:** A student with a twin or sibling who has been accepted into the STEM Program in the same grade level who is eligible for the first lottery and does not get selected for the program is eligible to be entered into the second lottery. If the eligible twin/sibling does not get selected for the program in the second lottery, then the STEM Program Academic Review Team will review the student's academic achievement and accept or deny the student into the program. A sibling of a current ninth, tenth, or eleventh grade STEM Program student that was eligible for the first lottery and was not selected for the program can go into the second lottery. If the eligible sibling does not get selected for the



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program in the second lottery, then the STEM Program Academic Review Team will review the student's academic achievement and accept or deny the student into the program.

- **Employee:** A student of a full time Effingham County School District staff member who is eligible for the first lottery and did not get selected for the program can go into the second lottery. If the Effingham County School District staff member's eligible student does not get selected for the program in the second lottery, then the STEM Program Academic Review Team can review the student's academic achievement for acceptance/denial into the program.
- **Transfer Student:** Students who transfer into the Effingham County School District during their seventh or eighth grade year may become eligible for the second lottery based on assessment scores identified in the criteria that are obtained by the end of the school year. A transfer student who enrolls with the district as a rising ninth grade student after the second lottery without necessary, required, and completed assessment scores can have their academic history reviewed by the STEM Program Academic Review Team to determine eligibility for the program. The parent is responsible for initiating the review and supplying all of the score data. If a waitlist exists after the second lottery, the transfer student who is found to be eligible will be placed at the end of the waitlist.

ECCA STEM Academy Program Enrollment Process

- Eligible students will receive a notification, by email, on or before mid-January of eligibility.
- Eligible students will receive an email and a letter will be sent home with the student at least one week prior to the STEM Program Information Night. The STEM Program Information Night will be held to share the expectations of the STEM Program including transportation, the application process, schedule, course sequence, expectations, etc.
- The first lottery will be held at ECCA with a live feed of the event for parents to view. A link to the event will be emailed to the parents. There will be no waitlist created.
- An email will be sent to parents to accept their student's spot for the next school year.
- Spots must be accepted by the deadline.
- If a student's lottery number is not selected in the first lottery, they will be automatically placed into the second lottery.
- Students who are eligible for the STEM Program, but do not complete their application by the deadline of the first lottery can apply for the second lottery by the second lottery deadline.
- Students who do not confirm their spot through the Second Lottery Acceptance form by the closing of the deadline will automatically go to the bottom of the waiting list.

Maintaining Enrollment at STEM

- Students who are sent to an alternative school for discipline while in the STEM Program may return to their base school at the completion of their time in the alternative school.
- Students may not apply to have their data reviewed for enrollment by the STEM Program Academic Review Team after the start of the school year UNLESS they are transferring from another STEM high school.



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- After the first nine-weeks' grading period, any student failing two or more classes will go before the STEM Program Academic Review Team to discuss the potential of returning to the base school.
- Students not on track to graduate (or with excessive course failures) will go before the STEM Program Academic Review Team to discuss potential of returning to the base school and/or be placed on probation for the program.
- Freshman students may choose to return to the base high school within the first ten days of the school year. Sophomores through Seniors may choose to return to the base high school within the first five days of the school year. Students returning to the base high school will be responsible for any assignments that were missed in his or her new classes.
- Students who unenroll from Effingham County School District for any reason will forfeit their spot and will not be able to re-enroll at the STEM Program.