



Frequently Asked Questions

What is STEM?

STEM – which stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics – 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 science and mathematics. That knowledge and passion translate into much higher rates of college attendance and more students majoring in scientific and technical fields. We will strive to help all students engage in the 4 C's: curiosity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication.

What is the STEM Academy?

The STEM Academy at ECCA is designed to prepare students for success in post-secondary education, career, and citizenship. It will 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.

How big is the STEM Academy at ECCA?

The Effingham County Board of Education added approximately 47,000 square feet to the existing Effingham College & Career Academy (ECCA) building and additional parking spaces to serve the growth. The STEM Academy at ECCA opened in 2016 with 125 freshmen and 125 sophomores. The school now accommodates 150 students per grade level. With 150 students per grade level, the STEM Academy will create a highly personalized learning environment with a small school model. At full capacity, it is expected that the STEM Academy at ECCA will house 600 students. These 600 students will be in addition to the approximately 600 students that are served through the ECCA CTAE Pathway programs.

Why limit the number to 150 per class?

This number of students has proven to work well to provide a personalized learning environment. Highly personalized learning within the small school model is a core attribute of the STEM Academy. This model focuses on a small learning community with an emphasis on individual student and faculty interaction. Each student's progress is individually assessed and addressed to achieve growth in both academic and workplace skills areas.

How much does it cost for my student to attend the STEM Academy?

Nothing. The STEM Academy is a specialized program school funded by the Effingham County School System and ESPLOST.

Will attending the STEM Academy help my student get into college?

The STEM Academy's mission is to produce students who are college- and work-ready upon graduation. School courses and curricula are designed to make sure STEM Academy graduates will be able to attend college and be successful once there. STEM Academy students will have the opportunity to earn college credits while still enrolled in high school through Advanced Placement exams and Move On When Ready (MOWR).

Does the STEM Academy offer foreign languages? Personal Fitness?

The STEM Academy will offer Spanish and French. Health and Personal Fitness is a graduation requirement for all students.

Can STEM Academy students graduate early?

No. STEM Academy students may not graduate early. STEM students are enrolled in an accelerated program and will earn more credits than the minimum required for graduation. Therefore, it is expected that STEM students take advantage of Advanced Placement (AP), Dual Enrollment (DE), or Work-Based Learning (WBL) opportunities during their junior and senior years.

If my student is enrolled full-time at the STEM Academy, how will I stay informed about events happening and information being distributed at the base high school?

All information that will be shared at base high school will be shared with the students at the STEM Academy.

Do the STEM Academy students have the opportunity to take part in hands-on internships?

The STEM Academy staff will work to develop new partnerships with STEM-focused businesses. The program is currently facilitated by the school Work-Based Learning Coordinators at Effingham County High School and South Effingham High School.

Who are the instructors? What are their credentials?

STEM Academy teachers are dedicated, passionate educators who continuously work to improve learning experiences for students. All Advanced Placement (AP) courses are taught by College Board certified instructors. Our teachers are employed by the Effingham County Board of Education.

Who can attend the STEM Academy?

Students living in the Effingham County School District may attend the STEM Academy if they meet the criteria. Our innovative, relevant programs will appeal to self-motivated, responsible students who seek a more personalized, small-school approach to learning, where academic subjects are connected, and where students engage in learning beyond the school walls. Students are admitted through a lottery process.

Why should my student attend the STEM Academy?

STEM Academy students will be given the opportunity to earn additional academic credits. Courses may be offered at the STEM Academy that are not offered at the base high school. The courses will be more rigorous, preparing students for STEM-related post-secondary majors and careers. Because the STEM Academy offers more Advanced Placement courses than the base high school, students may potentially earn additional college credits. STEM Academy students will also be immersed in problem based learning and have many opportunities for hands-on, real world experiences.

Should my student excel in science and mathematics to be successful in this program?

Yes. The student should be motivated in the disciplines of science and mathematics.

Do students receive a high school diploma from the STEM Academy?

Students will receive a diploma from their base high school. Upon successful completion of the STEM Academy graduation requirements, students will be acknowledged with a STEM Endorsement on Class Night and Graduation.

How are students transported to and from the school?

Morning - The STEM Academy offers a zero period starting at 7:30 AM. For the zero period, the student's parents must provide transportation to the STEM Academy. If the parent cannot provide transportation, there are two shuttle busses that depart from Marlow Elementary and South Effingham Elementary at 6:40 am each morning. **Afternoon** – At 2:30, students may be picked up from ECCA OR students will attend an Instructional Focus class for 7th period, be transported back to their base school at 3:15 pm, and may then be picked up from that school or ride their regularly scheduled bus home.

Can students return to their base high school after they've started the STEM Academy?

Yes. We ask students and parents to carefully consider if the STEM Academy is appropriate for them and recognize the responsibilities that come with attending this rigorous academic program. We are looking for students who want to be a part of something special, to take part in experiences not available at a typical high school, and to attend the STEM Academy for all four years. Students who enroll are expected to complete the school year. However, a student may withdraw from the STEM Academy within the first ten school days and return to their base school. The student will be responsible for any work missed at the base school. Students with a failing grade at the end of the nine-weeks grading period will be placed on academic probation. Parents will be required to attend a student parent conference to discuss academic probation. This meeting will include a conversation as to whether the student should continue at the STEM Academy or return to the base school. The administrator of the STEM Academy retains the authority to have the student return to the base school.

Will my student earn the five additional points for taking Honors/AP courses at the STEM Academy?

Yes. Please be mindful that while the additional points count for class rank/transcript grades, they will be removed in the HOPE GPA calculation.

How is Class Rank determined for the STEM Academy?

Final course grades are posted on the transcript for the base high school. Class Rank is calculated at the base high school.

Does the school have its own extracurricular activities?

Yes. The STEM Academy at ECCA will maintain several campus clubs, including a Math Club, Science Club, Programming Club, Tech Club and TSA (Technology Student Association). Students will spend time after school preparing for Robotics competitions, Science and Engineering Fairs, etc. STEM Academy students will be able to participate in sports and extra-curricular activities at their base high school.

Can I attend dances, homecoming, and prom at my base high school?

Yes. As with other extracurricular activities, STEM Academy students may participate in social events offered by their base high school.

Does the STEM Academy have a uniform policy?

Yes. Students must adhere to the uniform policy of their base high school.