

# Tennessee STEM School Designation Process

## FAQ

### Why is the Tennessee Department of Education offering a STEM Designation?

**Mission:** To promote rigorous STEM-related learning opportunities for all students that leads to postsecondary achievement and high quality careers.

**Vision:** To advance Tennessee as the leading state in STEM education, developing a workforce able to compete and succeed in the current and emerging global economy.

### Why implement a STEM education program?

STEM education is a unique approach to teaching and learning that fosters creativity and innovative thinking in all students. STEM is focused on building critical and creative thinking and analysis skills by addressing how students view and experience the world around them. Strong STEM teaching and learning opportunities rest on inquiry-, technology-, and project-based learning activities and lessons that are tied to the real world. It is a diverse, interdisciplinary curriculum where activities in one class complement those in other classes. In the STEM classroom, robust partnerships reach beyond the walls of the school to include higher education and business partners in real-world lessons. STEM education is one of the most effective tools we possess to prepare Tennessee students for tomorrow's workforce and success in college and career.

### Who is eligible to apply?

All K-12 schools serving students in the state of Tennessee are eligible.

### How long is the STEM Designation valid?

STEM School Designation will be valid for a 5-year period before reapplication will be required.

### What are the benefits to applying for STEM Designation?

A school that receives STEM Designation will be recognized by the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) for its use of STEM teaching and learning strategies and serve as a model from which other schools may visit and learn. Designated schools will also be invited to share promising practices at the annual Tennessee STEM Innovation Summit and become a recognized school of the Tennessee STEM Innovation Network.

## What is the process for earning the Tennessee STEM Designation?

- **Self-Assessment:** Schools intending to apply for designation should complete the self-assessment to determine their readiness and/or areas they may need support in.
- **Interview:** Inform the Tennessee STEM Innovation Network of the school's intent to apply by completing the interest form and submitting the self-assessment: <http://tsin.org/designation>. A representative will contact the school's designated contact to schedule an initial conversation to determine the school's readiness to apply and to assess if implementation supports are needed.
- **Portfolio Preparation:** Consists of the responses and artifacts compiled from the application. Schools obtain a letter of recommendation from their Director of Schools or District Superintendent and business partners.
- **Portfolio Review:** The Tennessee STEM Designation Review Team reviews the portfolio responses for each attribute and associated artifacts to make a recommendation to begin the review for recognition at the state level.
- **School Site Visit:** Visits will be conducted by members of the Tennessee STEM Designation Review Team to follow up on specific elements from the portfolio review. School site visits will only be conducted for those being considered for STEM School Designation based on their portfolio review outcomes.
- **Tennessee Department of Education Approval:** The STEM Designation Review team will make a recommendation for STEM School Designation awardees to the Tennessee Department of Education.

## How long will the designation process take?

Suggested Timeline for the 2018-2019 school year:

August 31, 2018	Complete STEM Self-Assessment Contact TSIN for Initial Interview
December 15, 2018	Complete STEM Designation Application with Completed Portfolio
Spring 2019	Conduct STEM School Site Visit after Portfolio Review
May 2019	Announcement of STEM Designated Schools

## Who makes up the Tennessee STEM Designation Review Team?

The Tennessee STEM Designation Review Team is comprised of members from the Tennessee Department of Education STEM Leadership Council and the Tennessee STEM Innovation Network.

## How are schools evaluated for STEM Designation?

There are 18 attributes for elementary and middle school and 19 attributes for high school that will be scored. For designation, each attribute is evaluated using a 4-point rubric (1-Early, 2-Developing, 3-Accomplishing, 4-Model). A school must demonstrate 90% 'Model' implementation to obtain designation. Schools that score a "1" or a "2" in any attribute will not be designated. There is a point value chart explaining the number of points required to obtain designation in both the rubric and self-assessment documents.

### **What does the site visit consist of?**

The site visit will be scheduled four weeks in advance. The Tennessee STEM Designation Review Team will be seeking to determine if the portfolio submitted aligns with school activities, will observe the classroom environment, and will be interviewing teachers, students, and community partners regarding STEM activities and learning experiences that are used within the school. The Review Team will use the attribute rubric to score their findings and observations.

### **Are there any supports being offered to help schools reach STEM Designation?**

Schools may request STEM implementation support through the Tennessee STEM Innovation Network. This support plan provides:

- readiness & needs assessment tools
- STEM action & sustainability planning
- teacher & counselor training, coaching & support
- community partnership & engagement strategies

### **If a school has a STEM program, are all students required to participate to be a STEM Designated School?**

Yes, the Tennessee STEM Designation was designed to recognize the 'whole school' model of STEM implementation. However, self-contained academies and small-learning community models dedicated to STEM will be considered in the interview process.

### **Are there any costs incurred during the STEM Designation?**

There is currently no direct cost to schools.

### **Can a school have a specific STEM focus, like transportation and logistics?**

Yes. STEM focuses and partnerships should reflect local priorities and assets.

### **Where can I find the STEM Designation Rubric, Self-Assessment, and Support Documents?**

All documents can be found at <http://www.tsin.org/designation>

### **Who should I contact if I have additional questions?**

Please direct all questions to [tsin@battelle.org](mailto:tsin@battelle.org) or contact the Tennessee STEM Innovation Network at 615-727-1361.