

Utah STEM School Designations 2025

Background:

The STEM School Designation process was assigned to the STEM Action Center in partnership with the Utah State Board of Education in 2014 Legislative session (Code Section 9-22-106 Subsection (2)(m)). In fall 2014 the Utah State Board of Education approved the ten Dimensions, and reviewed the full rubric as a discussion item in fall 2015.

The 2025 review process was completed in February 2025 and has resulted in the recommendation of eight Utah Schools for STEM School Designation awards for 2025. Four of these schools were awarded designation five years ago, and their initial designation has now expired- requiring them to reapply to maintain their designation status. Of these, one moved from Silver to Gold and the remaining three maintained their Platinum status. One school is new to the program and achieved Bronze status, and the remaining three schools have worked to increase their current status, with one school moving from Silver to Gold, and the other two moving from Gold to Platinum.

The STEM School Designation application process consists of a school scoring itself on 37 elements, which fall under the ten larger dimensions. After giving themselves a score ranging from 0-3, they provide a portfolio composed of a narrative explaining their score and evidence supporting their score and narrative. Schools that undertake the effort of becoming a STEM school are those that have taken the time to define what STEM looks like for them, and then create a plan to closer meet their definition of excellence. These schools have gone to the effort to create STEM-related processes that all teachers and students follow to create a STEM culture in their community. These schools recognize the use of a research-based framework as a structure for identifying areas of strength and areas of potential growth as it relates to their STEM environment. Work has been done to crosswalk the STEM School Designation rubric to multiple Utah State Board of Education programs, including Portrait of a Graduate, the high-quality teaching cycle, and Personalized Competency-Based Learning to support schools in leveraging all of these programs to create and maintain effective learning environments for all students.

All of these schools have incorporated open-ended, real-world problem solving tasks into their rigorous curriculum. Instead of STEM being a singular event, it is a part of their culture. Students at these schools are not only learning that mistakes and failures are teachable moments, but actually practice "failing" and learning from mistakes as well. They become more resilient, and are developing skills in understanding the ideas and perspectives of others.

Board Strategic Plan:

This item supports the Quality Learning Imperatives and strategies in the Board's Strategic Plan by setting STEM school designation standards with high expectations to promote each student's academic success.

Anticipated Action:

It is proposed the Utah State Board of Education consider approving the recommended 8

schools for STEM School Designation at the level recommended by the stakeholder review team for the 2025 school year.

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