

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE DASD STEM ACADEMY

Updated 11/4/09

Question	Answer
What is a STEM school?	STEM stands for the integration of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics disciplines into the overall curriculum. STEM Schools are designed with two key academic goals: all students will complete a rigorous college prep curriculum and the four year course of study will prepare students for academic and professional futures in these areas.
What is a magnet school?	Downingtown is considering whether to open a magnet school or a comprehensive high school. Magnet schools have something special to offer which makes them an attractive choice to many students. Magnet schools are theme-based public schools with a distinctive curriculum or instructional approach. They attract students from outside an assigned neighborhood attendance zone.
What is a comprehensive high school?	A comprehensive high school is a school that offers a full compliment of athletics, performance groups, etc.
When will the school open?	The Downingtown STEM Academy will open at the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year.
Can students from outside the district attend?	At this time, there are no plans to offer enrollment to students residing outside the boundaries of the Downingtown Area School District.
Which students will be eligible to enroll?	The STEM Academy will be open to DASD high school students who wish to apply. The "Program Sub-Committee" is considering this question. Their discussions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • specific admissions requirements (lottery, qualifications...) • phasing in (which grade levels and how many students...)
Where will the STEM Academy be located?	The STEM ACademy will be located in the Downingtown Education Center (formerly known as the Ninth Grade Center, Dowingtown Junior High, Downingtown Joint Junior-Senior High at 335 Manor Avenue).
What is the difference between curriculum in a regular High School and in a STEM school?	While all of our high schools offer a rigorous and relevant curriculum, the STEM curriculum is more project-based learning environment. Students will be exposed to the kinds of design and implementation practices that scientists and engineers use on a regular basis. We are considering implementing the International Baccalaureate Program at the Downingtown STEM Academy. All DASD schools provide programs that are anchored in the PA Academic Standards and meet the PA Chapter 4 requirements for graduation.
Is this school exculsively for gifted students?	No
How does this program compare to the Vocational Technical School- Center for Arts and Technology Program offered by Chester	The STEM Academy is not intended to replace this program offering for students. DASD students will have the opportunity to select one or the other based upon career interests and program offerings.

County Intermediate Unit?	
How can I inquire about employment in the STEM Academy?	Specific staff needs have not yet been identified. Once we determine the curriculum and program, specific staff needs and required certifications will be advertised by the Human Resources department. Staff openings will be posted on our website; go to www.dasd.org and click on “employment.”
How will this new Academy opportunity be communicated?	Our public relations sub-committee has identified the following PR strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of Downingtown Delivers • visits to Home and School Assn. • visits to local organizations • WCHE radio program “Chalk Talk” 2 pm Thursdays • student assemblies • website • publications for parents, businesses, students
How can a local business get involved to support this initiative?	We are looking for community partners to provide Internship opportunities in career fields for students. We are looking for financial partners to supplement resources necessary to deliver a 21 st century STEM program. Partnerships with the business and higher education community are critical to the success of STEM schools. The commitment of the community is part of the power of a STEM school as it is dedicated to preparing the next generation of innovators in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.
Is this going to be a cyber school?	This is not intended to be a cyber school. However, technology will be critical in the delivery of our 21 st century curriculum. Our goal is to assign each student a laptop as a critical tool for learning. Our curricular goal for technology is to integrate tools and strategies into daily instruction. Courses will likely contain online components to varying degrees.
How many students will attend the STEM Academy?	The capacity of the building is approximately 800 fully enrolled students. The “Program Sub-Committee” is in the process of determining how many and which grade levels will be phased into the Academy over the course of a few years.