

## A letter from the Principal

Dear STEM Academy Community:

We are off to a great start of the school year after a productive two-week summer bridge program. The energy and excitement the students have is contagious and it is an honor to work with such an enthusiastic and engaged community of students.

This inaugural STEM Academy Newsletter is intended to highlight and inform the GST STEM Academy community regarding current and upcoming activities at school. In this issue, you will hear from students and staff about the exciting projects and learning going on. You will also have several announcements for upcoming field trips, Open House and the first meeting for our school parent organization.

Thank you all for your consideration and support. I look forward to a great school year!



*Principal Jeremy Wheeler*

*Mr. Wheeler*

## PTSO meeting scheduled

Our STEM Academy Parent Teacher Student Organization (PTSO) will hold a meeting on Tuesday, October 18 at 5:00 p.m. at our school. The PTSO is a great way to get involved with the STEM Academy. We need your ideas and help to make this a successful year for our students. Please plan to attend.



## School calendar and emergency closing information

This is just a reminder that we follow the Greater Southern Tier BOCES Calendar that we sent home in in the Student Handbook. All students also have access to this document electronically. We will alert the media regarding emergency closings or delays at the STEM Academy. If a student's home district is closed or delayed, please follow the home district's announcement for the closing or delay.

We also will be using the Remind App for announcements, including STEM Academy school closings and delays. The Remind APP is a free text messaging app that helps teachers, students and parents communicate quickly and efficiently. The directions for signing up for these updates are included on page three of this newsletter.

## Schoology used to manage courses and track progress

As you already know, we are using Schoology at the GST STEM Academy. Schoology is an online course management system that allows teachers to create and manage academic courses for their students. All students are expected to utilize Schoology for learning activities, assignments and some tests and quizzes. Students receive continuous feedback on progress toward their learning targets and goals in their academic areas. Please ask your son or daughter to share information and progress through their Schoology accounts. They can access these accounts from any internet capable device. There is also a phone app for Schoology. The address for the STEM Academy Schoology site is: [STEMacademy.gstbooces.org](http://STEMacademy.gstbooces.org).

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## Students share their experiences at the STEM Academy

Here's what STEM Academy students had to say about their views and experiences so far during the first year at our school.

"The STEM Academy shows us skills needed in real life like teamwork, communication and thinking with precision. This school produces ready to work young men and women looking for challenge in a job."

*Skylar Carlson*

"At this school we don't just go in a textbook and start looking at problems then writing them out, solving them, and only finding one answer. Instead, we are learning that there is more than one right way, not just in math but in all of the classes. We are active learners, moving around the room and learning and thinking outside of the box. This benefits me as a student because I can learn as an adult how to think outside the box."

*Serfino Menard*

"The STEM Academy is a place where students can learn and progress in the outside world. Being a STEM student is a crazy ride but all students and teachers are so kind and want to support you, and show you how it feels to be treated like an actual adult.

STEM Academy is a place to grow and learn about new things. As a STEM student we can learn how to work with other people, we can go out of school on field trips to travel to more work places. Being a STEM student isn't about sitting in a classroom and just learning things that we might use, STEM will actually prepare us for the world ahead.

My favorite class is PIG also known as Participation in Government. In this class we learn about our government, not like normal social studies where you sit around, read, and get told that this is our government and now do a homework assignment about what you learned about today. At the STEM Academy it is so much different. We are engaged with the activity, we are looking at documents (like the Constitution, and Bill of Rights). Sometimes we combine English class with PIG and we annotate texts and other documents. The STEM Academy is a new way of learning, the way kids have always dreamed of learning."

*Alyssa Steinhauer*

"At STEM we participate in a roleplaying website about how we act throughout our courses. The site we use is Classcraft. Classcraft is a game that rewards you for

how you act in real world events. We get random events and challenges to complete to gain XP and Power Ups. Every time you level up you unlock new armor and magic for your character. Also it adds competition to class with guilds. Guilds are the student groups that are a team and work together to defeat bosses."

*Grayson Swan*



"Every day is an adventure to embark on and grow as a class and a community. Every day we have 5 classes, ELA, algebra (or geometry), participation in government, physical education, fine arts and technology and physics. ELA so far this year is fun and exciting. Almost every day we do something new. Mrs. Houck doesn't like making us read out of a text book which is new for us. In ELA we always work hands on and for the most part in groups. There is never a day we don't have a laugh in that class but we also are serious when it comes to learning new things. We have a journal that we write to Mrs. Houck in and we can ask her questions and she asks us questions. I personally like it and I think I can speak for the other half of the class when I say that it's a good idea and we should do this throughout our STEM experience. It's a good way of writing out your feelings or just as simple as asking questions you may have forgotten to ask in class. The hands on learning that we do really benefits us as students because most of us learn best that way.

Algebra/geometry is challenging but when we have the help of our partners, it isn't so bad because we get to share our ideas and build off of the ideas of others. We grow and learn from our mistakes. Right now in algebra we're doing the Overland Trail and it's a challenge, but it's fun.

*Continued on page 4*

# Sign up for important updates from Mr. Wheeler.

Get information for **Greater Southern Tier STEM Academy** right on your phone—not on handouts.

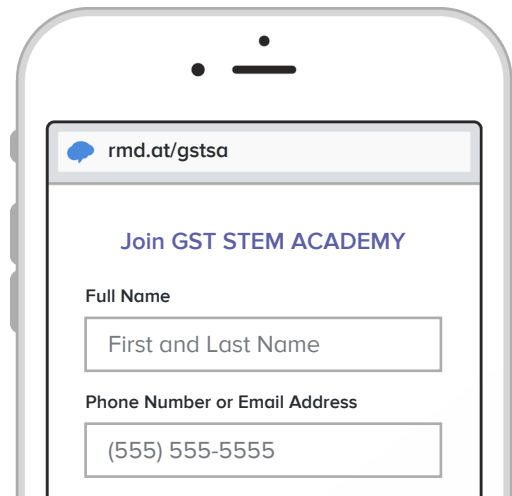
Pick a way to receive messages for **GST STEM ACADEMY**:

**A** If you have a smartphone, get push notifications.

On your iPhone or Android phone, open your web browser and go to the following link:

[rmd.at/gstsa](https://rmd.at/gstsa)

Follow the instructions to sign up for Remind. You'll be prompted to download the mobile app.



**B** If you don't have a smartphone, get text notifications.

Text the message [@gstsa](https://www.instagram.com/gstsa) to the number **81010**.

If you're having trouble with **81010**, try texting [@gstsa](https://www.instagram.com/gstsa) to **(703) 879-2124**.

*\* Standard text message rates apply.*



Don't have a mobile phone? Go to [rmd.at/gstsa](https://rmd.at/gstsa) on a desktop computer to sign up for email notifications.

## Q & A with Ms. Houck

Melissa Houck teaches English and government at the Greater Southern Tier STEM Academy.

### *Why did you choose to teach at the STEM Academy?*

This is my sixteenth year teaching. I started as an English teacher in Arkport for my first 10 years. I then shifted to the position as a curriculum mentor with GST BOCES for the last five years. I learned so much in my first 15 years of teaching that I was ready to get back in the classroom with students. But our students here at the STEM Academy are no ordinary students. This environment is why I am here. In order to take risks as a teacher to be innovative and creative, a teacher must be in an environment where a change agent is in place. Our principal, Mr. Jeremy Wheeler, supports, encourages and promotes new ideas that will drive students and provide relevance for their lives. I was inspired to teach at the STEM Academy because its mission is to redesign what we think of a student's educational experience. I wanted to be a part of that positive change of the face of education.



*Teacher Melissa Houck*

### *How is this educational experience different for students?*

Students are the center of their learning with the teacher as a facilitator. Students interact with their peers continually through collaboration and discussion. We have gamified the school to continue this interdependence among the students. They rely on each other to be successful at our school. Students no longer learn in 40 minute blocks, but integrate across the curriculum to see the relevance in what they are doing. Students focus on the professional skills and habits of mind they will need to be successful in the world more than a numerical average in a gradebook. The classroom is nearly paperless and student feedback is continual and progressive.

### *What will it provide students?*

Students are going to experience real-world situations they can use later in their professional careers. They will be problem solvers that are not afraid to tackle a project head on and accept the challenge willingly. They will be the future of our job force that will pave the way for leaders in business and industry. Our students will not only leave here with a college degree, but also, a professional skill set that will allow them to stand out in the field of their choice.

## Upcoming field trips

### **October 7**     **Manufacturing Day**

Students will have the opportunity to meet with 17 local businesses in the manufacturing field.

### **October 12**     **Hardinge Inc. Tour**

Students will get an in-depth, customized tour of Hardinge Inc.

### **October 14**     **Health Careers Expo**

Workshops will cover topics that expose students to the different careers within the Healthcare field.

## *Students share experiences, continued*

We have to make our families based on the restrictions and regulations then buy supplies for them to make it through the trip. We have to buy them things like; food, clothes, shoe laces, and weapons. When we do these activities they're always hands on which is great and it benefits us as students because most students would rather be learning hands on rather than sitting and listening to a teacher all class and taking notes and basically falling asleep in class. We also do P.O.W. which is "Problem Of the Week." For this we get a problem read to us and we listen to a problem from the text and write down the key information in our notebooks to help us figure out the problem. We do one of these a week."

*Megan Thomas*



*Like the Greater Southern Tier STEM Academy Facebook page to follow highlights of our daily activities.*