



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Strengthening STEM Through Partnership

A Celebration of Students' NASA Recognition and Achievement in the Classroom

Hartford, CT (May 9, 2025) Today, representatives from the Connecticut Science Center, Hartford Public Schools, and Annie Fisher STEM Magnet School, along with students, families, and state leaders, gathered to celebrate a dynamic, multi-year partnership that is elevating student achievement and engagement in STEM education.

Since the partnership's inception, the Connecticut Science Center has reached 2,382 students at Annie Fisher STEM Magnet School and welcomed over two hundred students on educational field trips to its Hartford-based Museum. This collaboration has helped drive a measurable increase in student achievement; NGSS (Next Generation Science Standards) performance at Annie Fisher has risen by 11% since 2023.

"At the Connecticut Science Center, we believe that deep, sustained partnerships are the key to transforming STEM education. Our collaboration with Annie Fisher STEM Magnet School is a powerful example of what's possible when community organizations and schools work together toward a shared vision" said Megan Ramer, Director of Programs at the Connecticut Science Center. "By providing immersive, hands-on STEM learning experiences both in and out of the classroom, we are not only supporting academic growth—we are helping students see themselves as future scientists, engineers, and innovators."

The relationship between the Connecticut Science Center and Annie Fisher STEM Magnet School dates back to 2015. However, beginning with the 2022–2023 academic year, the partnership deepened significantly, introducing consistent, integrated programming across the school. Students benefited from regular firsthand STEM experiences, professional learning workshops for teachers, and new afterschool programming.

In the Spring of 2023, the Science Center launched an afterschool initiative providing eight weeks of engaging STEM activities for students in grades K–8. This successful program has continued to this day, enriching the lives of students and supporting their academic journey. The Science Center also established a special collaboration for middle school girls through *SciGirls*, an initiative of NASA and the National Girls Collaborative Project, offering students a conversation with a female NASA role model and an opportunity to envision their future in STEM fields.

The partnership has extended beyond day-to-day learning, including Family STEM Nights, professional development workshops for teachers, and Science Center participation in Annie Fisher's school



governance board. Annie Fisher students have proudly competed in the Science Center's First LEGO League Expo year after year, with two teams participating in the 2025 competition – winning the Challenge Solution Award and the Fusion Force Award.

This sustained collaboration is a testament to the power of consistent community partnerships to drive academic achievement and foster a long-term passion for STEM.

A cornerstone piece of the partnership, launched this school year when students from Annie Fisher STEM Magnet School and staff from the Connecticut Science Center participated in the Competition for the Advancement of Technology in Space (C.A.T.S.), sponsored by the Orlando Science Center thanks to support from NASA. Through the course of this competition, students worked in teams, designing a lunar colony for future astronauts to live and work on the Moon. They dove deep into concepts such as engineering, plants, robotics, and electricity as they built a lunar habitat, food garden, lunar rover, and circuits for their projects.

“What I enjoyed most about being on the C.A.T.S. team was working with my partner to come up with ideas and build our Lunar base model. We shared our thoughts, solved problems together, and had fun creating. I really enjoyed getting to explore and share my ideas. I learned so much, and I am thankful for our teachers and for being part of this program,” said Mya Anderson, fifth grade student at Annie Fisher STEM Magnet School.

“At Annie Fisher STEM Magnet School, our mission is to provide students with rich, hands-on learning experiences in STEM. Thanks to our strong partnership with the Connecticut Science Center, this exciting program became a reality. Our students showed outstanding collaboration and commitment throughout each module, fully dedicating themselves to the program over the entire school year. The C.A.T.S. program not only deepened their understanding of space and NASA's work but also sparked their curiosity and enthusiasm for STEM learning and the future of space exploration,” said Principal Erin Wilson-Ruff of Annie Fisher STEM Magnet School.

Part of the celebration at Annie Fisher STEM Magnet School today included the presentation of the prestigious NASA C.A.T.S. Awards, honoring the creativity, perseverance, and innovation of the students. Annie Fisher STEM Magnet School proudly stands as one of only six schools nationwide to be partnering with a museum to participate in the esteemed NASA competition.

“NASA funding has enabled Orlando Science Center to engage students in the community with in-depth STEM learning opportunities and expose them to various STEM professionals and careers,” said JoAnn Newman, President and CEO of Orlando Science Center. “This type of multi-year funding is critical to allowing a consistent sustained presence in the community. We are inspiring tomorrow's space workforce today.”

Annie Fisher STEM Magnet School and the Connecticut Science Center are both excited about the future of this partnership. We look forward to the many possibilities ahead and the meaningful impact we can make on young learners—it is truly inspiring to think about.



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About the Connecticut Science Center: Located in downtown Hartford, the LEED Gold-certified Connecticut Science Center ignites creativity and fosters a love for science through engaging, hands-on interactive experiences—all while maintaining a commitment to environmental sustainability. With more than 165 hands-on exhibits, the Science Center explores a wide range of topics, including space and earth sciences, biology, the Connecticut River watershed, alternative energy, physical sciences, Connecticut's inventors and innovations, and more.

As a nonprofit organization, the Connecticut Science Center is committed to enhancing science education across Connecticut and New England, providing enriching learning opportunities for students and adults alike.

For more information, visit CTScienceCenter.org or call (860) SCIENCE.

About Hartford Public Schools: Hartford Public Schools serves more than 16,500 PreK-12 students from Hartford and nearly 70 surrounding towns. We are one of the largest public school districts in Connecticut, with thirty-nine schools, including 21 magnet school locations. We believe in our beautiful and capable students, high expectations, inclusiveness, collaboration, continuous improvement, and systemic accountability.

Our Mission is to provide all our students with the learning and support they need to succeed in school and in life. Our Vision is that all students will graduate prepared to transform our world. To learn more about Hartford Public Schools, please visit! www.hartfordschools.org.

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