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# Federal Agencies Collaborate to Improve After-School Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Education

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The U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program is leading new interagency partnerships to bring hands-on STEM learning opportunities to high-need students during after-school and out-of-school time. Through this collaboration, the Department will expand an existing pilot program with NASA and build new partnerships with the National Park Service (NPS) and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

These partnerships will create opportunities for students to engage in solving real-world STEM challenges with scientists and experts in their field. Overall, the number of participating 21st CCLC sites will increase from

approximately 20 last year to over 100. Participating states include: Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Michigan, Montana, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Texas, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin.

Engaging students during out-of-school time is an important tool for supporting all students learning in STEM subjects. Through these efforts:

- The National Park Service (NPS) will introduce environmental monitoring and citizen science programs at 11 schools overseen by the Bureau of Indian Education. The schools will work with park rangers as well as Hands on the Land, a national network of classrooms and resources that connect students to public lands, to bring their expertise to student learning.
- IMLS will support STEM-focused making and tinkering activities, building on enthusiasm for the "maker movement," at 25 schools and organizations across California, Florida, New York, Pennsylvania and Texas.
- NASA will support students as they work through one of six design and engineering challenges that scientists may face in navigating the solar system. Building on last year's efforts, students and support staff will interact directly with NASA engineers and scientists at up to 80 schools and organizations across 10 states.

The 21st CCLC program was created as part of the 1994 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). ESEA was signed into law in 1965 by President Lyndon Baines Johnson, who believed that "full educational opportunity" should be "our first national goal."

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has hearkened back to that goal by calling to replace the outmoded No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and to create a new ESEA that moves America closer to the promise of equity and real opportunity for every child.

For more information on how the 21st CCLC program and the interagency collaboration contribute to this vision, visit <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/21stcclc/index.html>.

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