



**Board Meeting:** March 3, 2025

**Title:** Student Spaceflight Experiments Program Discontinuation

**Type:** Information

**Presenters:** Jody De St. Hubert, Director of Teaching and Learning

**Description:** Over the last two years, Edina has participated in the Student Spaceflight Experiments Program (SSEP). SSEP was launched by the National Center for Earth and Space Science Education (NCESSSE) in strategic partnership with Nanoracks, LLC in 2010. It was designed as a model U.S. national Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education initiative and since the fall of 2022 has given students across Edina in 5th grade - 12th the ability to design and propose real microgravity experiments to fly in low Earth orbit (experiments conducted in a “weightless” environment).

We are grateful for the learning opportunity that SSEP has provided. The opportunity has aligned with and enhanced the key components of Edina STEAM: inquiry, authenticity, integration, and partnerships. We are also grateful for the Edina Education Fund's sponsorship of this experience for our students.

In the spring of 2024, we learned that Nanoracks is no longer partnering with NCESSSE. Nanoracks provided the crucial service of launching the SpaceX rockets that ferried SSEP student experiments to the International Space Station. NCESSSE has not secured another partner to provide this essential service and has suspended next year's program until a new vendor can be confirmed. EPS will be discontinuing our participation in SSEP due to this uncertainty.

Because the 5th grade STEAM Cornerstone Unit was connected to SSEP, we are creating a new 5th-grade STEAM experience. The new experience will include inquiry, authenticity, integration, and most importantly a secure partnership. Our Middle School and High School students will continue to have access to different rigorous STEAM experiences through Project Lead the Way courses. This will allow us to actualize our mission statement for each and every Edina student by encouraging creativity, fostering curiosity, and developing critical thinking skills.

**Recommendation:** This report is provided for information for the School Board and our Edina stakeholders.