



PROJECT EXPLORATION
changing the face of science.

FALL IN LOVE WITH STEM

Family Welcome & Enrollment Guide

Fall 2026 · Chicago, Illinois

*"This Fall, your child won't just learn STEM.
They'll become someone who sees themselves in it."*

What's inside:

- ☐ Welcome & student experience
- ☐ Master information sheet
- ☐ Pickup authorization
- ☐ Code of conduct
- ☐ Media & research permissions
- ☐ State-required forms (DFSS, Teen REACH)
- ☐ Family resource hub & FAQ

Fill out this form on your computer.

Sign it electronically.

Save it with your name.

Email it to Sharon Williams at swilliams@projectexploration.org

Questions? Call or text Sharon Williams at 312-273-9026
Need this in another language? Just ask!



Before You Begin

This guide walks you through everything you need to enroll your child in Project Exploration's (PE) FALL IN LOVE WITH STEM program. It should take about 15–20 minutes to complete.

Your completion checklist

- ☐ Master Information Sheet
- ☐ DFSS Participant Intake Form
- ☐ Teen REACH Individual/Family Risk Factors Form
- ☐ Late Pickup Policy (parent signature)
- ☐ Pickup Authorization Form
- ☐ Code of Conduct (parent + student signatures)
- ☐ Media & Yearbook Consent
- ☐ Research Participation Consent

Need help?

Call or text: 312-273-9026

Email: swilliams@projectexploration.org

Need this guide in another language?

Call us at 312-772-6634. We will connect you with a bilingual team member.

Accessibility note

Large print or audio versions of this guide are available upon request. Contact us at 312-772-6634.



What Your Child Will Experience

This Fall, your child joins a community of young scientists, engineers, designers, and problem-solvers. PE programs are hands-on, mentorship-driven, and built around one belief: every young person belongs in STEM.

This Fall your child will...

- Build — design, construct, and test real projects
- Experiment — ask questions, test ideas, and try again
- Explore — discover STEM careers and fields they may never have considered
- Collaborate — work in teams with peers from across Chicago
- Present — share their work and grow their confidence
- Meet STEM professionals — through mentorship and career conversations
- Visit community partners — field experiences beyond the classroom
- Celebrate at Showcase Day — the culminating event of the Fall

Did you know?

PE students participate in hands-on STEM experiences every week of the program.

Many PE alumni go on to pursue STEM majors and careers — and some come back as mentors.





Dear Future Scientist

A letter to your child — from the PE team

We don't know yet what you'll become.

Maybe an engineer. A doctor. A programmer. An architect. A researcher. An inventor.

Or maybe you'll create a career that doesn't have a name yet — because you'll be the first person to do it.

What we do know is this:

You belong here.

This Fall is yours.

Show up curious.

Ask the questions that feel too big.

Try things that might not work.

Disagree respectfully.

Build something with your hands.

Meet someone who does the thing you think you might want to do someday.

We can't wait to learn with you.

With excitement,

The Project Exploration Team
changing the face of science.



What Parents Can Expect

PE is committed to keeping you informed and connected throughout the Fall. Here is when and how you'll hear from us:

You'll hear from us when:

- Your child has a milestone, breakthrough, or great day worth celebrating
- We notice a concern and want to address it together
- There is an emergency or urgent safety matter
- There is a schedule change, cancellation, or weather-related update
- Exciting opportunities come up — field trips, career events, or community partners

How would you prefer us to communicate with you? (phone call, text, email):

Primary contact method:

Backup contact method:

We will reach out via phone call, text, or email depending on urgency. Emergency communications go out immediately. General updates are shared weekly.

Did you know?

Our staff-to-student ratio is designed to ensure every young person is known by name and supported throughout the Fall.

Your PE contacts this Fall (to be filled out by PE Staff)

Site Coordinator:

Phone/Text:

Program Director:

Phone/Text:

Family Contact / Main Office:

Phone/Text:

Main office: 312-772-6634 · info@projectexploration.org · projectexploration.org



Fall at a Glance · Keep This Page!

Print this page and put it somewhere you'll see it.

Orientation



Date: _____

Meet your team, see the space, ask your questions.

First Day of Programming



Date: _____

Exploration begins. Drop off by 3:30 PM.

Field Trips



Dates: _____

Off-site STEM experiences. Watch for permission slips.

Family Engagement Events



Dates: _____

You're invited. Come see what your child is building.

Showcase Day



Date: _____

The big culminating celebration. All families welcome.

Last Day



Date: _____

Pickup by 5:00 PM sharp. Final day pickup policy in effect.

Program hours

Daily hours: 3:30 PM – 6:00 PM · Late pickup fee begins at 6:01 PM

STEM Learning Center (SLC) address: _____



Master Information Sheet

Complete this sheet once. All other forms in this guide reference this information — you will not be asked to rewrite it.

Student information

Student's legal first name:

Preferred name / nickname:

Grade entering in fall:

Home address:

City:

Primary language spoken at home:

Does your child have an IEP or 504 plan?

☐ Yes — attach documentation if available

☐ No

Any medical conditions, allergies, or needs we should know about:

Last name:

Date of birth:

School attending:

ZIP code: _____

Is your child an English language learner (ELL)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Parent / guardian information

Parent/guardian full name:

Primary phone:

Email address:

Preferred contact method:

☐ Call ☐ Text ☐ Email

Relationship to student:

Secondary phone:



Second parent / guardian (if applicable)

Full name:

Relationship to student:

Primary phone:

Email:

Emergency contact (someone other than a parent/guardian)

Full name:

Relationship:

Primary phone:

Secondary phone:

Program interest

What does your child want to be when they grow up? (No wrong answers!)

Is this your first year with Project Exploration?

☐ Yes, first year ☐ Returning family # years attended: ____

PE STAFF USE ONLY

Date received: _____

Reviewed by: _____

Site assignment: _____

eCornerstone entry: _____

Notes: _____



Late Pickup Policy

Please read this policy carefully. Your signature confirms you understand and agree to the terms below.

☐ Complete

☐ Signed

☐ Submitted

At a glance — Late Pickup

- ☐ Program ends at 6:00 PM daily
- ☐ Call before 5:45 PM if you know you'll be late: 312-273-4026
- ☐ Late fee: \$1.00 per minute after 6:00 PM without advance notice
- ☐ Three repeated late pickups may require a family meeting with program staff

Full Policy

Project Exploration (PE) FALL IN LOVE WITH STEM programming ends each day at 6:00 PM. Families are expected to pick up students on time or arrange for an authorized person to do so (see Pickup Authorization Form).

If you anticipate arriving after 6:00 PM, please contact the STEM Learning Center (SLC) at 312-273-4026 before 5:45 PM. Advance notice allows staff to plan appropriately.

A late pickup fee of \$1.00 per minute will be assessed for pickups after 6:00 PM without advance notice. Fees are due within five (5) business days.

Three (3) instances of late pickup without advance communication may result in a required meeting with PE program staff and, in persistent cases, may affect continued enrollment.

In the event of an emergency that prevents timely pickup, contact PE staff as soon as possible at 312-772-6634.

Parent/guardian signature

By signing below, I confirm that I have read, understand, and agree to the Late Pickup Policy.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Printed Name

Date: _____

PE STAFF USE ONLY

Date received: _____

Late fees assessed: Yes No

Notes:



Required State & Funder Forms

Why are these forms here?

PE receives public funding from the City of Chicago and the State of Illinois. In exchange, our funding partners require us to collect specific information about program participants.

This information:

- Remains confidential and is never shared publicly
- Helps PE secure funding that keeps programs free or low-cost for families
- Does not affect your child's eligibility, enrollment, or experience

Thank you for your patience with these required questions.

This section contains:

- DFSS Participant Intake Form — required by the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS)
- Teen REACH Individual/Family Risk Factors Form — required by the Illinois Teen REACH program for eCornerstone data entry

Why we ask — Teen REACH form

The Teen REACH form includes questions about family circumstances and risk factors. We know some of these questions feel personal. They are required by the State of Illinois for all publicly funded youth programs.

Your answers are entered into the eCornerstone state database by PE staff only. They are kept strictly confidential and used solely for compliance and funding reporting. They do not affect your child's enrollment.

If you have concerns about any question, please speak with a PE staff member before completing the form.

Nota: El Formulario de Admisión de Participante de DFSS y el formulario de Teen REACH aparecen en las páginas siguientes. Estos formularios se reproducen como documentos oficiales. Por favor complete todos los campos.

SOLO PARA USO DEL PERSONAL DE PE (PE STAFF USE ONLY)

DFSS form received: Yes No

Teen REACH form received: Yes No

eCornerstone entry complete: Yes No

Entered by: _____

Date: _____



Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to Project Exploration (PE)! We are thrilled to have you as part of our extended family and are excited to embark on a journey of exploration, discovery, and growth with your child. At PE, we firmly believe that every young person has the potential to become a scientist, doctor, engineer, astronaut, computer programmer, and more! In our programs, your child will enjoy:

- **Hands-On Exploration:** We offer a wide range of hands-on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) activities that foster curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking. We can't wait to get to know your child, and plan future activities with their interests centered.
- **Mentorship:** We bring in real-world STEM professionals who serve as mentors. These connections help your child envision a future in potential STEM careers.
- **Community Engagement:** We actively engage with the communities we serve, forging partnerships with schools, organizations, museums, and corporations to increase the opportunities your child receives. Your involvement as parents and guardians is crucial, and we hope to get to know you, too, throughout the year. Please look for our communications!
- **Field Trips, Events, and Partnerships:** We will invite your child and family to a wide array of events and activities throughout the year! We'll hope you'll join us and learn about what all of our wonderful partners have to offer from free giveaways to scholarships, events, and more!

To ensure that we can we tailor our programs to your child's needs and interests, as well share their successes with our partners, **we request you share your responses to the questions below.**

What does your child want to be when they grow up?

What does your child enjoy doing?

Does your child have an IEP or 504? . . . Yes . . . No

If yes, what accommodations would be helpful to ensure they fully benefit from PE's program?

Media Release: I hereby grant PE and its agents the unrestricted and irrevocable license and right to use my child's appearance, form, likeness, and voice contained in the photographs, film, or recordings, and to distribute such images and recordings for promotional, editorial trade, advertising, packaging, selling, licensing, commercial or educational purposes in any manner or medium whether now or hereafter devised, throughout the world, in perpetuity. Any funds earned by Project Exploration from such activities will be used to support Project Exploration and its charitable and educational mission. I agree

On the following page is our intake form, which is required for your student to participate in PE programs. Basic demographic data is shared with our funders to ensure that we can always ensure that these opportunities are free for our students and families. If you have any questions or concerns about the questions, please reach out to us by phone or text at 312-772-6634.

Once again, welcome to Project Exploration. Together, we are changing the face of STEM!

Sincerely,
The PE Team

PARTICIPANT INTAKE FORM

*To be completed
by PE Program
Assistant

AGENCY NAME: Project Exploration

PROGRAM NAME*:

PARTICIPANT

Last Name _____ **First Name** _____ **Phone #** _____ **Home Mobile Email** _____

Participant phone and email not required if participant is 17 years of age or younger

Address _____ **Apt No** _____ **City, State, Zip code** _____

TYPE OF PROGRAM:

- ☒ Out-of-School
☐ CHA
☐ Mentoring

**Parent/
Guardian:**

Name (First & Last) _____ **Phone #** _____ **Email** _____

Parent/Guardian phone and email not required if participant is 18 years of age or older

**PREFERRED PARENT
CONTACT METHOD:**

Email _____ Phone/Text _____

**Emergency
Contact:**

Name (First & Last) _____ **Phone #** _____ **Relation** _____

Gender (check one) ☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Transgender ☐ Non- Binary ☐ Choose not to identify	Race/Ethnicity (check one) ☐ American Indian / Alaskan Native ☐ Asian ☐ Black / African American ☐ Middle Eastern/North African ☐ Other Multi-Racial ☐ Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander ☐ White ☐ Two or more races ☐ Choose not to identify	Do you identify as Latin(x)/ Hispanic? ☐ Yes ☐ No	School Name (Current or last attended): 	Current grade OR highest level of education completed:
		Pronouns: 	Primary language spoken at home: 	CPS/Student ID# (if applicable):
Date of Birth 	Does the participant have a disability? Check one: Yes No If yes, please specify any accommodations needed:			

Please check all that apply:

- ☐ English Language Learner / English as a Second Language (ELL/ESL)
☐ Connected to foster care system
☐ Experiencing homelessness/unstably housed
☐ Currently out of school AND out of work
☐ Pregnant or parenting
☐ None of these apply

CONSENT STATEMENTS (check the boxes to the left of each statement):

- ☐ I certify that the above information is accurate. I give my permission for the above named to participate in this program and to follow all program requirements.

- ☐ I understand that, as part of the agency's contract with the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS), the agency is expected to collect and report participant-level demographic, performance, and service data to DFSS. This includes but is not limited to data in this youth registration form, youth attendance, youth survey data, and program outcomes. The agency must implement policies and procedures to ensure privacy and confidentiality of client records for both paper files and electronic databases.

Program Staff Signature / Date: _____

Signature* _____ **Date** _____

**Parent/Guardian signature required for all participants 17 years of age or younger.*

**Youth signature required for all participants 18 years of age or older.*

Check One:

YES

NO

I give permission for the agency to share the participant's photograph and/or video with the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services for promotional purposes, including posting on social media, per the department's discretions without any compensation.

Teen REACH

Individual / Family Risk Factors



Name: _____

Teen REACH program services are provided for at-risk children and youth ages 6 to 17. The individual and/or family risk factors of youth targeted by the Teen REACH program include but are not limited to the characteristics in the table below. The Illinois Department of Human Services asks us to gather this information on each child to be entered into the eCornerstone system. Check any that apply.

All answers are confidential.

Youth is living in a single-parent household	Youth is unsupervised after school
Youth is residing in a household receiving TANF funds	Youth has witnessed family violence or been a victim of family violence
Youth is experiencing academic difficulties	Youth identifies as LGBTQ
Youth is in danger of repeating one or more academic years (or has been previously held back)	Youth has siblings who dropped out of school
Youth is experiencing truancy	Youth has siblings who are teen parents
Youth is reported to have behavioral issues	Youth has siblings who are involved in the juvenile justice system
Youth is reported to be a victim of bullying	Youth has one or both parents who are incarcerated
Youth is reported to be a perpetrator of bullying	Youth has siblings who are gang-involved
Youth is in the DCFS system	Youth is reported to be gang-involved
Youth is homeless	Youth is pregnant
Youth is parenting	



Pickup Authorization

This form identifies who is authorized to pick up your child from PE programming.

Photo ID is required at pickup for anyone not known to staff. Student information is on file from your Master Information Sheet.

☐ Complete

☐ Signed

☐ Submitted

Primary authorized pickup person

Full name:

Relationship to student:

Primary phone:

Secondary phone:

Authorization: ☐ Every day

☐ Specific dates only — list dates:

Secondary authorized pickup person

Full name:

Relationship to student:

Primary phone:

Secondary phone:

Authorization: ☐ Every day

☐ Specific dates only — list dates:

Additional authorized pickup persons (optional)

Full name:

Phone:

Full name:

Phone:



Important

Photo ID is required at pickup for all authorized persons not known to PE staff.

If someone not on this list attempts pickup, staff will contact the parent/guardian listed on the Master Information Sheet before releasing the student.

To make changes to this form during the program, contact PE staff in writing at 312-772-6634.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Printed Name

Date: _____

PE STAFF USE ONLY

Date received: _____

Verified by: _____

Notes:



Code of Conduct · STEM Learning Center

PE programs are community spaces. These community agreements make them work for everyone. Please read with your child before signing.

☐ Complete

☐ Signed

☐ Submitted

Community agreements at a glance

- ☐ Respect everyone — peers, staff, and the space
- ☐ Stay engaged and present during program hours
- ☐ Keep phones in the designated bin during instruction
- ☐ Follow staff directions the first time
- ☐ Food and drinks stay in the multipurpose room only

Full code of conduct

Students enrolled in PE programming at the SLC agree to the following:

Sign-in and presence

Students must sign in upon arrival and remain in the program space during program hours. Leaving the building without staff permission is not permitted.

Respect for people and property

Students are expected to treat all peers, staff, guests, and program property with respect. Harassment, bullying, physical altercations, and intentional property damage will not be tolerated.

Phone policy

Phones and personal devices must be placed in the designated bin at the start of each session. Devices will be returned at the end of the day. Exceptions for medical or emergency use must be pre-approved by program staff.

Food and drink

Food and beverages are permitted only in the multipurpose room. No food in learning spaces.



Engagement

Students are expected to participate in all program activities. Consistent disengagement or refusal to participate may result in a parent/guardian notification.

Behavior response — three-step process

- Step 1 — Verbal reminder from staff. The student is reminded of the community agreement.
- Step 2 — Parent/guardian notification. Staff contacts the family to discuss the concern.
- Step 3 — Required family meeting. If behavior continues, a meeting with parent/guardian and PE leadership is required before the student may return.

Behaviors that present immediate safety risks may result in immediate removal and required family meeting, bypassing steps 1 and 2.

Attendance policy

Students are expected to attend all scheduled program days. A maximum of five (5) unexcused absences may result in removal from the program to allow another student to participate. Please notify staff in advance of any absences at 312-772-6634.

Signatures

By signing below, the student agrees to uphold the community agreements. The parent/guardian agrees to support these agreements at home and to respond promptly to PE staff communications.

Student Signature

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date:

Date:

Student Printed Name

Parent/Guardian Printed Name

PE STAFF USE ONLY

Date received: _____

Reviewed by: _____

Notes:



Media & Yearbook Consent

We love to document and celebrate the amazing things PE students build, create, and discover. This form asks for your permission to use photos and videos of your child.

☐ Complete

☐ Signed

☐ Submitted

How we use photos and videos

- ☐ Fall yearbook (distributed to families)
- ☐ PE newsletter (sent to supporters and families)
- ☐ PE website — projectexploration.org
- ☐ PE social media (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, LinkedIn)

Your choice

- ☐ YES — I give permission for PE to photograph and/or record my child for the purposes listed above.
- ☐ NO — I do not give permission. My child's image will not be used in PE materials.

Legal notice

By selecting YES above, you grant Project Exploration a non-exclusive, royalty-free license to photograph, record, and use images and video of your child in PE promotional, educational, and documentation materials. This consent is valid unless revoked in writing.

To revoke consent, contact PE in writing at info@projectexploration.org or by mail.

Contact: Lidia Swire, lswire@projectexploration.org.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Printed Name

Date: _____

PE STAFF USE ONLY

Date received: _____

Consent status: Yes No

Notes:



Research Participation Consent

What is this and why does it matter?

PE studies how students grow in STEM confidence and career interest over the course of the Fall. This research helps us improve our programs and demonstrate impact to funders — which helps keep programs free or low-cost for families like yours.

Participation is entirely voluntary. Declining has no effect on your child's enrollment or experience.

About this study

- What: A short end-of-Fall survey about STEM identity, confidence, and career interest
- When: Administered near the end of the program (fall 2026–fall 2027 cycle)
- Time: Approximately 10 minutes
- Confidential: Responses are kept confidential and reported only in aggregate
- Voluntary: Your child may decline or stop at any time with no consequence

Questions about this study?

Contact: Miguel Angel Vazquez III (MAV III)

Phone:

Email:

Your choice

- ☐ YES — I consent to my child participating in PE's end-of-Fall research survey.
- ☐ NO — I decline. My child will not be asked to complete the research survey.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Printed Name

Date: _____

PE STAFF USE ONLY

Date received: _____

Consent status: Yes No

Entered by: _____



Family Resource Hub

Everything you need in one place. Print this page out.

Contact information

Main office: 312-772-6634

Text line: 312-772-6634

Email: info@projectexploration.org

Website: projectexploration.org

Instagram: [@projectexploration](https://www.instagram.com/projectexploration)

Facebook: Project Exploration

Your site this Fall

Site name:

Site coordinator:

Site address:

Office hours:

Site phone:



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Can my child bring a phone?

Phones are collected at the start of each program day and returned at dismissal. This keeps students engaged and present. Exceptions for medical or emergency use must be pre-approved by staff.

What should my child wear?

Comfortable clothing appropriate for hands-on activity. Closed-toe shoes are required. We recommend avoiding clothing you'd be upset to see paint or glue on.

Does my child need to bring snack or dinner?

Yes, unless otherwise communicated by your site coordinator. PE does not provide dinner unless specifically noted for your site. Snacks may be provided.

Can someone else pick up my child?

Yes — but they must be listed on your Pickup Authorization Form and must show a photo ID. No exceptions.

What if I'm running late for pickup?

Call 312-772-6634 before 3:45 PM. Call 312-772-6634 before 4:45 PM. A late pickup fee of \$1/minute applies after 6:00 PM without advance notice.

How do medications work?

PE staff are not permitted to administer medication. If your child requires medication during program hours, please contact your site coordinator to discuss options before the program begins.

What happens if programming is canceled?

PE will contact families via phone and/or text as soon as possible. Make sure your contact information on the Master Information Sheet is current.

Who do I call if I have a concern?

Start with your site coordinator. If the concern is unresolved, contact the PE main office at 312-772-6634 or info@projectexploration.org



You're Almost Ready!

Here's what happens after you submit your completed guide:

- ☐ PE staff review your forms for completeness
- ☐ You'll receive confirmation of your site assignment
- ☐ Watch for orientation details — date, time, and what to bring
- ☐ You'll receive program reminders and updates via your preferred contact method
- ☐ We'll see you at orientation — and then on the first day!

Welcome to Project Exploration.

changing the face of science.

Submit your completed guide

Return all pages — including the DFSS and Teen REACH forms — to your PE site coordinator

Questions? 312-273-9026 · swilliams@projectexploration.org



✂ Tear out and keep this page ✂

PROJECT EXPLORATION · FALL IN LOVE WITH STEM

changing the face of science.

Phone / text

312-772-6634

Email

info@projectexploration.org

Website

projectexploration.org

Instagram

@projexplore

Site address

Site coordinator

Site phone

Office hours

10:30 AM – 5:00 PM

Orientation

First Day

Showcase Day
(Reflection of Knowledge)

Late pickup reminder

Program ends at 5:00 PM · Call before 4:30 PM if running late · 312-772-6634