

Central STEM 2025-26 Handbook

Introduction

As of August 2022, Central STEM operates as a ministry of Central Triad Church. Our mission is to deliver an exceptional curriculum across all areas of study with a focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) to Triad-area homeschoolers while serving families with excellence. This handbook serves as a set of guidelines to ensure clarity, consistency, and fairness in our policies and procedures. The Central STEM Admin reserves the right to make necessary decisions in the best interest of the program and its participants.

Mission

Central STEM (hereinafter referred to as STEM) is a group rooted in Christian principles, dedicated to supporting homeschooling families in their mission to educate their children.

Our instructors are independent contractors who are bringing their passion and expertise to the homeschooling community in the classes they offer.

STEM offers academic and enrichment classes designed to complement homeschool curricula. While we support homeschooling efforts, STEM is not a traditional school. Course offerings vary each semester based on available instructors and curriculum opportunities. As we do not require a signed statement of faith, we unite members from diverse denominations to foster learning, growth, and inspiration in a Christian, family-friendly environment.

Leadership and Communication

Current Admin Team (Katie Knickrehm, Emily Neel, and Karen Lytle):

- **Admin Email:** centralstemnc@gmail.com
- Open communication is key to a successful program. Address issues promptly with instructors.
- The Admin team is available for meetings as needed. Parents may discuss concerns regarding instructor communication with the Admin team.

General Policies

- **Visitation Days** – Tours are available in October and March. Check the website to register.

- **Severe Weather** – STEM does not follow a specific school district's closings/delays. Check the website and email for announcements.
- **Drop-Off** – Parents must ensure students enter the building safely before leaving.
- **Pick-Up** – Parents may pick up students inside or via the drive-thru pickup line. Students will be released only when their car is at the front of the line.
- **Lunch** – Students will eat lunch outside unless it is raining or temperatures are extremely cold. Please dress your children accordingly (i.e. layers are best). Whether outside or inside, students must remain in designated areas under adult supervision.
- **Parental Support** – Families must pay a \$130 support deposit per semester, which can be partially or fully reimbursed by fulfilling support roles (\$20/hour for most positions, paid according to given pay schedule).
- **Absences** – Notify STEM via text (336-310-5155) if your child will be absent. Instructors will be informed accordingly. We account for all children every hour and instructors report students not already on the absentee list to confirm absences with parents.
- **Grade Level Enrollment** – Strict adherence to class grade levels is required. Exceptions are subject to instructor and Admin approval.
- **Email Forwarding** – Requests for email forwarding are limited to educational and homeschool-related activities.
- **Enrollment Priority** – Registration priority is based on the following seniority: 1) Admin, 2) Instructors, 3) Staff, 4) Seniority by number of consecutive semesters enrolled.
- **Classroom Visitors** – Parents/visitors are not permitted in classrooms unless approved by the Admin in advance.

Special Needs

Central STEM is not a traditional school and, as such, is not equipped to provide specialized support or accommodations for students with special needs. While our program may occasionally be a good fit for some students without requiring modifications, this is not guaranteed. Parents of children with special needs must contact and discuss their child's specific circumstances with all relevant instructors and Admin (centralstemnc@gmail.com) prior to registration to ensure the class environment and expectations align with the student's abilities and needs. This step is essential to determine if participation is appropriate, as our staff and resources are not designed to address individualized educational or behavioral support beyond the scope of our standard offerings.

Prerequisites

We adhere to all instructor prerequisites as it appears in their course descriptions. By registering for a class, you agree that you have met or will have met all of the prerequisites for that class before the course begins.

Behavior Policies

STEM upholds high behavior standards. Students and parents must conduct themselves respectfully in alignment with Christian values.

- **Respect & Conduct** – Students must be respectful, polite, and self-controlled. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated.
- **Disciplinary Action** – Most infractions receive one warning before intervention by Central STEM Admin. Repeated or severe offenses may result in suspension or expulsion. Fighting, bullying, possession of illegal items, and inappropriate conversations or behavior will result in immediate expulsion. Possession of illegal items results in immediate expulsion and police notification.
- **Electronic Devices** – Cell phones and devices are not allowed in class or study hall unless approved by an instructor.
- **Public Displays of Affection (PDA)** – Hand-holding, kissing, and other forms of PDA are prohibited.
- **Online Conduct** – STEM participants must uphold Christian values in online communications, including social media and emails.

Classroom Expectations

1. Respect others' rights and property; address adults with titles of respect (e.g., Mr., Mrs.).
2. Use an appropriate conversational tone.
3. Arrive punctually to each class.
4. Listen attentively and raise hands to speak.
5. Avoid distractions like note-passing, throwing objects, or using irrelevant items (e.g., laser pens, games).
6. Maintain clean classrooms and grounds; do not damage church property. Parents are financially liable for accidental or intentional damage, reflecting biblical stewardship.
7. Inability or unwillingness to bring behavior under control may lead to removal from class and parental notification. Parents may be required to stay on campus for two weeks following repeat offenses.
8. We do not compromise on our academic standards. This ensures that we retain quality instructors and foster excellence. Students must participate and complete all assignments.
9. Consistent non-participation or incomplete work may result in suspension or dismissal without refund (see Academic Class Policy).
10. Refer to course descriptions or syllabi for specific expectations, including study hall.

Academic Class Policy

Students in academic classes must:

1. Be prepared and participate actively.

2. Stay current with assignments.
3. Contact instructors if absent, and make up missed work.
4. Submit assignments on time—failure to do so may result in dismissal from class.
5. Incidents of plagiarism, cheating, or using unauthorized resources can result in suspension.

Students who miss two weeks of assignments may not attend class until they are caught up. Suspended students must stay with a parent or in study hall (\$5/hour) during their suspension. Three weeks of incomplete assignments will result in expulsion from the class.

Payment Information

Accepted Payment Methods:

- **Zelle** (New as of March 2025)
- **Checks** (personal, cashier's, money orders)
- **Cash** (Must be hand-delivered for a receipt)

Fee Structure (per semester):

- **Registration Fee** (per family): \$75 (Non-refundable)
- **Facility Fee:** \$10 per class period (Pods, AIM, Aspire span multiple class periods) (max \$100 per family)
- **Support Deposit:** \$130 (refundable with completed support hours)
- **Study Hall Fee:** \$35 per semester hour

Payment Deadlines:

- **Fall 2025** – Half of fees due April 3, 2025; full payment due by June 1, 2025.
 - **Spring 2026** – Half of fees due upon registration; full payment due by December 1, 2025.
 - Late payments incur a \$25 fee.
 - There will be no refunds after the final due date.
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Course Changes, Withdrawals, and Refunds

1. Deadline to change or cancel any class and receive credit / refund
 - a. Fall classes - June 1

- b. Spring classes - December 1
 2. The following are never credited / refunded even if you withdraw before the deadline:
Registration Fee, Late Fee, Digital Payment Fee (Zelle)
 3. Study Hall may replace a dropped class at Admin's discretion. Late additions to Study Hall are pro-rated.
 4. If you are on the waitlist for a class, you do not owe anything until you secure a seat in the class.
 5. If all of your classes are waitlisted, you will owe no fees until you secure a seat in at least one class.
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Dress Code

1. STEM does not enforce a strict dress code but expects modest, tasteful attire.
 2. Clothing should allow for comfortable movement and remain appropriate while sitting or bending.
 3. Parents should monitor their child's clothing carefully to ensure it aligns with Christian values and is appropriate for a church setting. If unsure about an outfit's appropriateness, it is best not to wear it.
 4. **Shirts, skirts, dresses, pants, and shorts should:**
 - a. Be an appropriate length for sitting and moving modestly.
 - b. Have necklines that fully cover cleavage, even when bending.
 - c. Cover the abdomen and lower back completely, even when sitting or bending.
 5. Parents will be required to bring a change of clothing if a student's attire is deemed immodest or offensive (including inappropriate t-shirt graphics and logos).
 6. Boys and girls should wear jeans, pants, or shorts that:
 - a. Are neat, clean, and fit comfortably.
 - b. Are neither too tight nor excessively baggy.
 7. Shirts with sleeves are preferred, and t-shirts are acceptable for all.
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Parental Support

- The success of STEM depends on active parent involvement. However, we understand that not every parent can be on campus. Therefore, parents are required to pay a \$130 support fee per semester but can recoup some or all of this fee (\$20/hour) by fulfilling designated support roles.
- A variety of support positions are available, including setup, cleanup, lunch duty, entrance monitoring, and classroom assistance.

- Parents who commit to a support role must take responsibility for fulfilling their assigned duty. If a conflict arises, they must either find a replacement or notify the Support Coordinator.
- Parents assisting in classrooms may not bring children with them. However, children are permitted to accompany parents for some roles involving cleanup and setup.
- Once a support position is selected, please mark your calendars to avoid scheduling conflicts. Repeated failure to fulfill assigned duties will result in the loss of eligibility to select support positions in future semesters.

This handbook serves as a reference for all Central STEM policies and expectations. By enrolling in STEM, families agree to abide by these guidelines, ensuring a productive, respectful, and enriching environment for all participants.