



Welcome to the Intel Schools of Distinction program!

We are delighted you are considering applying. We want to encourage you to join us as we seek exemplary schools worthy of being celebrated, showcased and rewarded for providing their students the best science and or mathematics education possible.

As you work through the application we know you will have questions: What are the judges really looking for? What should I focus my application on? Isn't there a rubric I can work from?

Although we understand and applaud the value of transparency, in this case we don't believe a rubric or template will serve you well. If you look at the [schools that have won](#) this competition over the years - and I encourage you to do so! - you will see that the schools that have won, both in the categories of math and science at the elementary, middle and high school levels, and as the Star Innovator, have varied widely.

These have included residential magnet schools, charter schools, schools in wealthy communities with all the resources that implies, as well as small, poor rural schools, middle class suburban schools, inner city schools surrounded by poverty and crime, schools that have suffered 'near death experiences' under NCLB and come back strong, schools as old as the states they sit in and others as young as 3 years. Some have every rich technology resource money can buy, and others are making very careful budgetary choices in order to offer their students a window into the broader world through technology.

Virtually every type of school you can think of has been represented. Each of these schools has provided an outstanding experience in math and/or science education for their students, but how they go about that is as varied as are the schools themselves.

So what can I tell you about our values and what we are looking for so as to help you share the very best that your school has to tell us? Let me offer some guidance. We are looking for the intersection of:

Environment: Exemplary math and science learning environments in which the entire school values and supports the teaching of these critical subjects. What evidence can you share demonstrating that math and science are not segregated within the school, but are integrated throughout the school?

Replicability: Schools whose accomplishments can serve as a role model for others. Is what you have done replicable? Can it be shared with others in a useful and useable fashion?

Alignment: Do teachers at your school understand and apply the national standards to their own teaching and their students' learning? Does the school measure itself and its students against these standards and take explicit action to ensure student achievement and continuous improvement?

Leadership: This encompasses the principal, executive staff and other leaders within the school, as well as leadership and support at the district or organizational level. How do these leaders create an environment in which science and math are valued and nurtured, and success is assured?

Involvement and support from parents and the community: How does the school foster the relationship with parents and the broader community and draw upon this to strengthen the math/science program? How does the community nurture the school and support its efforts in these areas?

Collaboration and Teamwork: How is a collaborative environment created and sustained? How does the structure of the school day, the collegiality of the teachers, and the nature of the school facility itself foster this teamwork and ensure that the students and their learning are the beneficiaries?

Student Achievement: Do students achieve strong standardized test scores as an indicator of results? We value schools that have achieved and maintained the highest standards over many years, but we also value schools that have turned around a difficult situation, or who achieve remarkable results in light of the challenges they and their students face on a daily basis. Test scores are a valuable indicator, but not the sole measure of success, as can be seen by the range of selection criteria. Also consider describing achievement against the benchmarks laid out by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills in the ICT literacy maps for science and math.

Effective Use of Technology: Is the school making wise choices as to how - and when - to use rich digital content and technology to open their school to the world and bring the world to their students? Are your students able to use technology effectively, safely and independently to become passionate lifelong learners? Is technology adding to the richness and depth of student learning?

Professional Development: We believe that teachers need time to work together to plan and strategize, and that professional development needs to be integrated into that context. We applaud schools that develop a whole-school strategy for addressing barriers and issues that face their students and their school community with well-thought-out professional development plans. We look for PD that changes practice and empowers teachers (not take-and-bake offerings that simply offer a singular classroom experience and a set of hand outs).

We understand that few if any schools will be equally outstanding in each of these areas. Our judges weigh each of these components in order to arrive at a final selection of schools that offer exemplary science and/or mathematics education. There is both art and science in the judging process - and much rich discussion and debate among the judges. We have learned a tremendous amount from each year's cohort of applicants, as we know we will from you, this year.

We applaud you for your willingness to hold yourselves and your schools up for scrutiny, and for the pride we know you feel in work that is so critically important to the students and communities you serve, and to the future of this nation, and the world at large. Thank you for all you do.

Wendy Hawkins
Executive Director
Intel Foundation