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## PRESS RELEASE

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### Reimagining Education Through STEM: ACCESS Lending Library Resources

National Capitol Region Educators Inspire the Next Generation

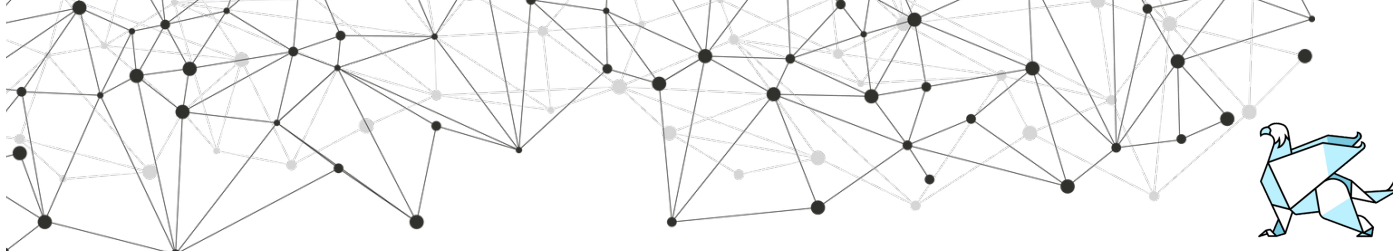


Students at Ravensworth Elementary School learned about coding with Edison Robots.

Arlington, V.A. (March 6, 2025) - Over 1600 students in the National Capital Region and West Virginia gained hands-on STEM learning experiences in 2024 between the months of September and December, made possible through the Advancing Collaborative Curriculum Engagement for STEM Stakeholders (ACCESS) Lending Library Program, led by the Air Force Office of Scientific Research (AFOSR) STEM Team. This unique program, launched in March of 2024, provides free access to cutting-edge technological resources and professional development opportunities, empowering educators to bring STEM concepts to life in their classrooms.

Resource-sharing, a key component of the program, creates a sustainable model which fosters a collaborative environment among the cohort. Resources are borrowed for up

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to two weeks at a time, allowing educators to integrate relevant concepts into their classrooms as well as teach students the importance of sharing.

The ACCESS Lending Library aligns with mission objectives of AFOSR, Department of Defense (DoD) STEM, the Federal Strategic Plan for Advancing STEM Education and Cultivating STEM Talent, and the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Mathematics (NASEM).

Professional development is also available throughout the program. On-site professional learning occurred multiple times throughout the year at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., welcoming all 23 members of the cohort to network, collaborate, and grow both personally and professionally.

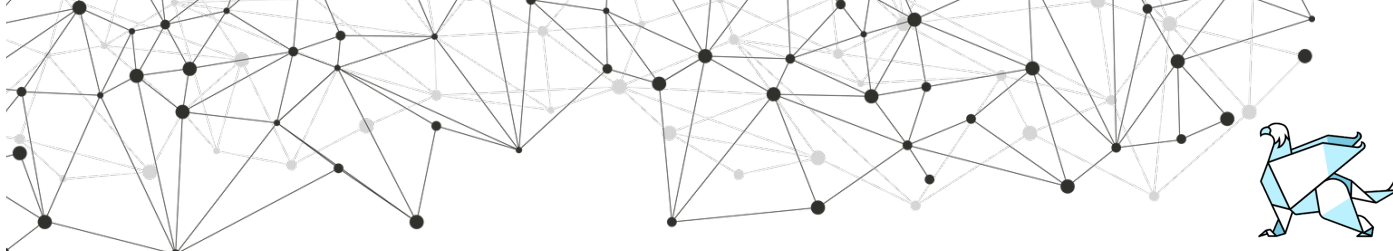
Svea Anderson, STEM Education Specialist for the Griffiss Institute supporting AFOSR STEM, is thrilled at the results of the program in its very first iteration. “The educators in our ACCESS cohort are enthusiastic and passionate about STEM education and are willing to step out of their comfort zones to learn about new technologies,” Svea notes, “They engage their students with the resources in creative ways that align back to educational standards and appropriate grade level content.”

Andrea Trumbull, an Advanced Academics Resource Teacher at Ravensworth Elementary School, shared Edison Robots with nearly 600 students, inspiring engagement across grade levels. “These resources have given me a fresh take on teaching,” she says. Andrea earned her National Board-Certification in 2013, polished by a Maintenance of Certification (MOC) in 2022, and emphasizes the importance of adapting to the needs of the students. “I’ve been teaching for almost 20 years, and none of the years have been the same,” she admits.

Her classroom can be described as a productive and energetic space, where students feel comfortable taking risks and making “a mess to make meaning,” as Andrea puts it. She aims to inspire students with meaningful connections, trying the technology back to other subjects they are interested in.

Desanka “Desa” Elwell, Integrated Engineering Teacher at Thomas A. Edison High School in Virginia, works with unique student cohorts through the Global STEM Challenges Program in Fairfax County. With engineering as her specialty, Desa works hard to present a comprehensive curriculum focusing on hands-on experiences rather than relying on textbook learning.

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Her 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students were the first to test out the DroneBlocks indoor classroom sets. “They can see the potential of what’s being used in the real world,” Desa explains, “As part of their research, they have to find [a drone] that will fit their [theoretical] stakeholders needs, understanding lift capacity, length of battery life, and more.”

The STEM Teacher Leadership Academy (STLA), an immersive professional development experience for K-12 educators in the National Capital Region also led by AFOSR, welcomed Desa into their first cohort in 2022, connecting her to resources like the Lending Library and other professional development opportunities over time.

Tara Walker, a 2024 participant in STLA and current Lending Library member, has enjoyed diving into everything each program has to offer. As a 5-6<sup>th</sup> grade science teacher at Friendship Public Charter Schools (Chamberlain campus) in Washington, D.C., Tara works with a multiple group of students - including those who benefit from Individualized Education Programs and 504 plans.

The decision to transition from teaching at the collegiate level to primarily working with middle school students in 2022 held personal significance for Tara, who wanted to make a difference in the lives of younger students.

Ozobots, which Tara was first introduced to during her time with STLA, were a tremendous success among her students. “They were able to see something that we don’t have in our everyday classroom, and it was phenomenal for them,” Tara said, noting, “their eyes lit up like Christmas trees.”

As the demand for STEM education continues to grow in the National Capital Region, the ACCESS Lending Library Program remains committed to empowering educators and students alike. The next evolution of the program will come to light in 2025, encouraging more leadership opportunities through the implementation of a ‘train the trainer’ model. “In this reimagined program, we will still offer learning opportunities for the teachers in our cohort, but we will also give them the platform to share the resources with their colleagues, so they reach even more students,” explains Kate Kogge, STEM Education Specialist for the Griffiss Institute supporting AFOSR STEM.

For more information, [afosrstem.org/access](http://afosrstem.org/access).

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**About Griffiss Institute** - *The Griffiss Institute (GI) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit talent and technology accelerator for the United States Department of Defense and an international network of academic, government and industry partners. Since 2002, the GI has served the Air Force Research Laboratory Information Directorate, the Mohawk Valley region, and the United States, empowering diverse teams with talent and technology development programs that lead the nation in technical and economic impact.*

**About AFOSR STEM** - *The technological superiority of the Air Force depends on the availability of experienced, well trained scientists, engineers and a science literate public. AFOSR is committed to improving scientific literacy among students, educators, and the public to foster a highly skilled workforce and promote STEM advocacy. AFOSR's education funding opportunities and community-based program initiatives promote the engagement of diverse stakeholders in understanding and contributing to technological advances. Our goal is to bring the excitement of the Air Force Research Laboratory to life for learners of all ages.*

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