CONNECTICUT SCIENCE & ENGINEERING FAIR

2026-2027 Student Guide: Fall Edition

Afilliate Programs

Conducted by the Connecticut Science Fair Association, Inc.
An all-volunteer Connecticut non-profit organization
www.ctsciencefair.org

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Fair's History and Mission

The Connecticut Science Fair Association, Inc. is a nonprofit educational organization that serves the youth of Connecticut by providing opportunities for recognition for those whose interests are in the scientific and engineering disciplines. The Fair originated in 1949 as the Northern Connecticut Science Fair through the interest of science teachers and business leaders spearheaded by then education editor of Hartford Times, Albert I. Prince. A non-profit corporation was formed in 1959 and chartered for the entire state. Mr. J. Randolph Gibson, a middle school teacher at Hartford's Kennelly School, was instrumental in the continuation of the fair. His student, George "Bob" Wisner, followed in his volunteerism footsteps and led the organization for another 50 years.

The Connecticut Science & Engineering Fair provides a yearly, statewide science and engineering fair open to all 7th through 12th grade students residing, or enrolled, in Connecticut schools and one New York town. We are a charter member of the International Science and Engineering Fair, an activity of the Society for Science, Washington, D.C. We are an all-volunteer organization, with funds directed to students awards, fair operation, student/teacher workshops, educational presentations, and participation by our winners in international competitions.

Our mission is to interest young people in careers in science and engineering through recognition for their science achievements and by providing opportunities for them to interact with engineers and scientists. Our program starts in the middle school grades to provide science and technology nurturing when students transition from middle school to high school.

Our venue provides a meeting ground for those interested in research, engineering, and mathematics. We stress the formalism of scientific and engineering methods. Strong communication skills are fostered by the science fair through the verbal and written elements of the competition.

Over one hundred schools, regional, and city fairs feed our state fair. Students from Connecticut and Fishers Island compete for the 600 spaces at the state fair. Our top winners receive all-expense paid trips to compete in the International Science and Engineering Fair, and GENIUS Olympiad competitions. Our competition is a gateway to the Thermo Fisher Scientific Middle School STEM competition, and the Stockholm Junior Water Prize. We work to interest youth in careers in science and engineering through our yearly fair, teacher and student workshops, presentations, web site, and distribution of materials describing the science fair process.

Special Thanks to:

Alumni & Friends

Banning Family
Evelyn Brown
Dr. Susan DeCorte McMillan
Dr. Charles Dimmick
Bob Erickson
Ernest and Fay Gagnon
Bob and Cammie Harris
Leask Family, ISEF '10
Lessoff Family
David Liscinsky
Sandra & Wynn Müller
Otero Family - ISEF '96, '97, '98
Schoepfer Family
Wisner Family – ISEF '58, '59
Bruce Zepke

Business Friends

Adobe
Hedges & Hedges
Spencer Sloane Photographer
TechSoup
TurnKey Compliance Solutions

And to the MANY volunteers that make the Fair possible.

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Connecticut Science and Engineering Fair Schedule

Wednesday, February 26, 2027
Project Portal opens for project upload

Monday, March 1, 2027
Project uploads due

Thursday, March 11, 2027
Virtual Life Science Preliminary Judging, 9 am -1:30 pm

Friday, March 12, 2027
Virtual Physical Science Preliminary Judging, 9 am -1:30 pm

Sunday, March 14, 2027
Finalist List posted to website by 5 p.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2027
Finalist Judging, in person at Quinnipiac University 7:30 am – 1 pm

Thursday, March 18, 2027
Finalist List posted to website by 5 p.m.

Saturday, March 20, 2027
Middle School Finalists Awards Ceremony at Quinnipiac University, 9 am – 10 am
Special Awards Ceremony at Quinnipiac University, 10:30 am - 11:30 am
High School Finalists Awards Ceremony at Quinnipiac University, 12:00 pm - 1:30 pm

Project Registration Questions: **registrationhs@ctsciencefair.org**
Fair Director: **director@ctsciencefair.org**
Website: **www.ctsciencefair.org**

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The **Connecticut Science and Engineering Fair** is the oldest and most prestigious STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) event in the State. It is my pleasure to invite your school to participate in the **2027 79th Fair,** with virtual preliminary judging March 11-12 and in-person finalist judging on March 17 at Quinnipiac University. Celebrating our 79th year, the Fair's mission is to interest students in science and engineering careers. Fair projects typically examine problems and provide solutions to current environmental, medical, biological, chemical, engineering, and societal issues – no TV-personified, old-school volcanoes here! Previous top-performing Fair projects have caught the attention of major national research laboratories, garnered patents, resulted in start-up companies, and have been published in scientific, peer-reviewed journals.

The Fair and its organizational committee is here to support experienced schools as well as those who might be "first timers": we provide workshops for teachers and students, technical support online and by phone, and access to a network of practicing scientists and engineers.

2027 Highlights and Changes

- **PROJECT QUOTAS FOR SCHOOLS** – 10 Middle School and 15 High School
- **PROJECT REGISTRATION FEE** – $**50** per project
- **PRELIMINARY VIRTUAL JUDGING FOR ALL PROJECTS** – We plan to once again provide virtual judging for all students in a preliminary round on March 11 and 12. Please note these dates are at the end of the week with a quick turnaround for finalist judging
- **FINALIST IN-PERSON JUDGING** – The top 20% of projects will be invited to Quinnipiac University on Wednesday, March 11 for in person finalist judging.
- **ELEVEN SPECIAL CATEGORIES**– Biotechnology, Alternative/Renewable Energy, Applied Technology, Bioinformatics/Computational Sciences, Computer Science, Engineering, Environmental Science, Mathematics, Future Sustainability, Technical High Schools, Women In Science & Engineering.
- **OVER $500,000 IN AWARDS**– We expect more than 400 awards will be presented at the Fair by its Category and Special Award Sponsors.
- **INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS**– Top winning high school projects, either individual or team, will compete in the International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) scheduled for Los Angeles, CA in May. High school finalists and one eighth grade project will be awarded the opportunity to compete at the GENIUS Olympiad in Rochester, NY.
- **THERMO FISHER SCIENTIFIC NATIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOLS STEM COMPETITION** – Top winning middle school students in specific categories will be given invitations to compete.
- **AI DISCLOSURES** – The Connecticut Science and Engineering Fair is proactively addressing the use of AI and requiring proper disclosure of its use. Please refer to the Student Guide and 1-pager for additional information and requirements.
- **COMMUNICATIONS** – As a program that promotes the independent, self-development of students, only students or teachers will be permitted to communicate with Fair personnel regarding projects. Students may submit parent or guardian email addresses during registration for the purpose of them receiving information only. Students participating as independents, unaffiliated with a school, may contact me regarding alternative needs.

Register online at **http://www.ctsciencefair.org**. Regional Fair allocations are handled on a case-by-case basis. Deadline for school registration is October 31. There is a $50 per project non-refundable registration fee due at the time of registration. Your school need not have a science fair to send students to the CSEF.

Refer registration questions to:
School and Project/Student Registration
Mrs. Evelyn Brown, Project Registration Chair
registrationhs@ctsciencefair.org

Fair information is updated frequently on our website at **www.ctsciencefair.org**. A wealth of information and resources can be found there.
We look forward to seeing you and your students at the Fair.

For the Fair Committee,
Joe Vogel, Fair Director

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Fair Categories

Regular Fair Categories

Projects are classified as either Life Sciences or Physical Sciences and further divided by grade and team.

Grade 7	Life Sciences	Physical Sciences
Grade 8	Life Sciences	Physical Sciences
Grades 7&8 Team	Life Sciences	Physical Sciences
Grades 9-12	Life Sciences	Physical Sciences
Grades 9-12 Team	Life Sciences	Physical Sciences

Life science projects include behavioral and social sciences, biochemistry, botany, environmental sciences, medicine and health, microbiology, and zoology. Physical science projects encompass chemistry, computer science, earth and space sciences, engineering, mathematics and physics. Team projects are limited to three students. *Note.* All awards subject to change depending on the availability of grant sponsorship.

Major Category Awards

Biotechnology Awards

Biotechnology projects include those that utilize biological systems or living organisms and include areas such as medical, industrial, environmental and marine biotechnology. The top high school winning project receives an invitation to compete at the ISEF.

Engineering Awards

For projects in the disciplines of aeronautical, electrical, mechanical, electro-optical, and optical engineering. Criteria include the demonstration of good engineering practices in the development of working hardware. The top high school winning project receives an invitation to compete at the ISEF.

Life Sciences Awards

The two top high school winning projects, individual or team, receive all-expense-paid trips to compete at the ISEF. Cash awards, trophies, plaques, and medallions for top winners and recognition plaques for finalists.

Life Sciences projects investigate living organisms, biological processes, health, behavior, and the interactions between organisms and their environments. Projects may involve experimentation, observational research, field studies, computational analysis, or the development and testing of biologically based solutions. Areas may include cellular and molecular biology, microbiology, genetics, biotechnology, plant and animal sciences, medicine and health, behavioral and social sciences, ecology, and environmental science. All projects assigned to the Life Sciences division compete for Life Sciences Awards and may also qualify for consideration in applicable major or special award categories.

Physical Sciences Awards

The two top high school winning projects, individual or team, receive all-expense-paid trips to compete at the ISEF. Cash awards, trophies, plaques, and medallions for top winners and recognition plaques for finalists.

Physical Sciences projects investigate nonliving systems and the principles that govern matter, energy, motion, forces, Earth, space, technology, and designed systems. Projects may involve experimentation, theoretical research, mathematical or computational analysis, engineering design, or the development and testing of technological solutions. Areas may include physics, chemistry, astronomy, Earth and planetary science, materials science, energy, mathematics, computer science, and engineering. All projects assigned to the Physical Sciences division compete for Physical Sciences Awards and may also qualify for consideration in applicable major or special award categories.

Urban School Challenge

Students attending district or magnet schools ***and*** residing in a Connecticut Alliance School District will compete against one another for major prizes. For team projects, at least one student must meet the residency requirement. The top high school project, either individual or team, will win an opportunity to compete in the ISEF. The top 8th-grade project wins an opportunity to compete at the GENIUS Olympiad, and the highest-scoring 7th-grade project will attend Project Oceanology's week-long Ocean Camp in Groton.

Special Category Awards

Projects at the fair are considered for awards in multiple categories. Projects are selected by special judging panels. Consideration for these awards is separate from the Fair judging for Life and Physical Sciences.

Alternative/Renewable Energy Awards

Cash awards, trophies and medallions for projects that best promote an educated energy-conscious society. Projects address concepts in clean renewable/sustainable energy.

Applied Technology Awards

For projects applying technology to demonstrate a practical solution to a stated problem or by creating a functionally interesting use of technology.

Computational Sciences & Bioinformatics

For projects that leverage big data or mathematical modeling to explain biological phenomena. Projects include the development and application of data-analytical and theoretical methods, mathematical modeling and computational simulation techniques to the study of biological, behavior, and social systems.

Computer Science Awards

For projects which deal with computer architecture or software development directed towards better computers and software.

Environmental Science Awards

For projects in environmental science and observational behavioral studies of animals in the environment.

Future Sustainability Awards

For energy, engineering, and environmental projects addressing future sustainability of our planet. Projects demonstrate where energy is produced and consumed with minimal environmental impact; while maximizing energy efficiency and minimizing greenhouse gas emissions (i.e., energy efficiency, smart grids, carbon capture and storage, electrification of transportation, decentralized energy generation).

Mathematics Awards

For theoretical and analytical mathematics research. Projects may include developing or using models that enable conclusions, identify correlations and/or predictions using data analysis, probability, statistics, filtering and trending techniques, designs, and tools. Theoretical projects include thought experiments, proof of existing theories, development/proof of new theories, formation of concepts, or design of a mathematical model.

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Technical High School Awards
For projects submitted for students who attend a technical high school focused on weatherization, clean energy, and energy efficiency. The top project will win an opportunity to compete at GENIUS Olympiad.

Women in Science and Engineering Awards
Recognizes young women in grades 7 & 8 and 9 to 12 for their outstanding research achievements in Life and Physical Sciences.

Scholarships
presented by:
Quinnipiac University
University of Connecticut
University of Hartford
University of New Haven

Special Awards
In addition to the category awards, more than 200 special awards presented by 100 professional societies and businesses are awarded.

Important Dates and Deadlines

September
School Registration opens Project Registration opens

October
October 15: Deadline to seek approval from the Registration Chair for independent *(unaffiliated with a school)* student status. October 31: School registrations due October 31: Deadline for fees due and permission to register as an independent

November
November 15: Independent middle and high school project registrations due

December
December 1: High school project registrations due December 1: Non-EZ Path middle school registrations due

January

February
February 15: Middle school registrations due February 15: Affiliated school fair registrations due February 26: Project upload site opens

March
March 1: Project uploads due March 11-12: Preliminary judging March 14: Finalists list posted March 17: Finalist judging March 18 Special Awards winners posting March 20: Awards Ceremony

April

May
May 8-14: International Science and Engineering Fair

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Eligibility and Registration

General

- Open to all 7th through 12th grade students residing, or enrolled, in Connecticut schools and the Fishers Island, NY School who register through **School Registration**.
- To be eligible, schools must register by October 31 and meet the other registration deadlines. Only on-line school registrations are accepted.
- A non-refundable registration fee of $50 per project must accompany the registration.
- Registrations will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Schools may be granted additional registrants at the discretion of the registration chair.
- The number of registrants for each school is limited to: 10 per middle school, 15 per senior high school, or combined middle/senior high schools may enter under both categories accordingly. Assigned quotas will be reviewed at the end of November.
- All science fairs sending finalists to CSEF must be conducted prior to February 15.

Student/Project Registration

- Students from schools not affiliated with the Fair and home school students can register directly. Completed registration forms and a $50 registration fee must be received by October 31. If the number of students from a school not affiliated with the Fair exceeds the Fair's affiliated school allocation, the fair committee will select the projects based on the quality of the work proposed in the research plan. Students so affected will be informed shortly after November 15.
- Middle and high school students registering independently of a school must register with the state Fair as soon as they select their topic and no later than November 15.
- High school students from registered schools must register with the state fair as soon as they select their topic and no later than December 1.
- Non-EZ Path Middle School Projects from registered schools must submit their registration including a research plan online for approval by December 1.
- Middle school students must submit their online registration immediately after their school fair and no later than February 15.
- Students from school competitions must submit their registration online by 11:59 PM February 15. No registrations will be accepted after this deadline.
- Team Projects are limited to no more than three members. Members must be the same over the course of the project work and in representing the team at the Fair. Projects cannot be converted from an individual project to a team project or vice versa.
- High school students may compete in only one International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF)-affiliated fair except when proceeding to a state fair from an ISEF-affiliated regional fair as a finalist.
- Students may only enter one project per year.

Register online at:

http://ctsciencefair.org/registration/project-registration

Projects failing to meet eligibility requirements will not be eligible to compete. ISEF rules and forms can be downloaded from the Society for Science **website**.

Registration and Fair Communication

You will receive multiple communications for each step in the registration process and Fair participation. If you do not receive these emails, please check the following two common reasons: 1) typos in your email and/or phone number; and 2) some school Internet filters block communication to students from outside sources. Please check the accuracy of your contact information and whether or not your school blocks these emails. Please contact the Registration Chair (registrationhs@ctsciencefair.org) about any communication issues well in advance of registration deadlines.

Research Plan/Prior Approval

For writing your research plan see the **website**.

Required Components for a Research Plan

Students wishing to compete at the Connecticut Science and Engineering Fair must submit a Research Plan that complies with all rules and regulations of the International Science and Engineering Fair. The Research Plans must include the following components:

a. **RATIONALE:** Include a brief synopsis of the background that supports your research problem and explain why this research is important and if applicable, explain any societal impact of your research.

b. **RESEARCH QUESTION(S), HYPOTHESIS(ES), ENGINEERING GOAL(S), EXPECTED OUTCOMES:** How is this based on the rationale described above?

c. **PROCEDURES AND METHODOLOGIES:**

- *Procedures:* Detail all procedures and experimental design including methods for data collection. Describe only your project.
- *Risk and Safety:* Identify any potential risks and safety precautions needed.
- *Data Analysis:* Describe the procedures you will use to analyze the data/results.

d. **BIBLIOGRAPHY:** List 5 major references (e.g. science journal articles, books, internet sites) from your literature review.

Projects involving any of the items listed below require prior approval and a research plan ***must be submitted*** to the CSEF Scientific Review Committee prior to the start of research and no later than December 1.

- Human Participants/Human Subject Questionnaires
- Nonhuman Vertebrate Animals (Observational studies of animals in their natural habitat do not require additional ISEF forms.)
- Pathogenic Agents, Controlled Substances, Recombinant DNA
- Human or Animal Tissue
- Hazardous Substances or Devices

If there are questions regarding project eligibility, contact the Fair's Registration Chairman, Mrs. Evelyn Brown, at registrationhs@ctsciencefair.org

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Biological research involving animals, humans, pathogenic agents, or recombinant DNA is not allowed except in institutional/industrial settings with proper supervision. Project registration must include the state fair project registration form, research plan questionnaire, and research plan. The online research questionnaire describes what additional forms are needed for life science and possibly hazardous projects. Copies of the CSEF required forms are available at: **www.ctsciencefair.org**

The forms must be completed on-line, then signed where required and uploaded as PDFs. High school and non-EZ Path middle school projects are required to submit their research plans for review by the CSEF Scientific Review Committee.

Project registration must include the state fair project registration form, research plan questionnaire, and research plan. The online research questionnaire describes what additional forms are needed for life science and possibly hazardous projects. Copies of the CSEF required forms are available at: **www.ctsciencefair.org**

Take the EZ Path

You can avoid the task of filling out the forms required for biological and hazardous research by choosing topics that do not involve these issues. Review the lists below and if your research or engineering project does not involve any of these areas, your work does not require formal review by a Scientific Review Committee and may quality for **EZ Path**. Your research plan submission to our registration committee will be checked to make sure that we agree with you and, if we do, your project will be approved. See also:

Non-EZ Path Middle School Projects

Non-EZ Path Middle School Projects must submit their online registration including research plan for approval by December 1 (November 15 for projects not affiliated with a school). This applies to all projects that potentially could be selected by school fairs to compete at the CSEF.

Connecticut Science and Engineering Fair Research Pathways

Middle School and (possibly) High School students have a choice of the EZ Path or the Unrestricted Research Path.
Prior to the start of research, the student chooses the desired path route and informs the teacher prior to start of research

EZ PATH

*Projects **MUST NOT** involve the following items:*



Biological
- Blood products, fresh tissue, teeth & bodily fluids
- Human Subjects§
- Nonhuman vertebrate animals or their parts
- Potentially pathogenic agents, including all bacteria
- Recombinant DNA



Chemical
- Controlled substances
- Carcinogenic, mutagenic & toxic chemicals
- Explosive chemicals
- Radioactive materials
- Compressed gases



Energy
- Hazardous substances or devices
- High voltage equipment
- Class 3 and 4 Lasers
- Ionization radiation (X-rays/nuclear energy)

FORMS REQUIRED

- Checklist for adult sponsor (online)
- Registration Form (online)
- Research Plan (online)
- Release Form (online)

Very few human subjects projects qualify for EZ Path. See 'Exempt Studies' of the ISEF rules found at https://www.societyforscience.org/isef/international-rules/human-participants/. Other human projects can be approved by a school-based IRB, but do not qualify for EZ Path and Form 4 (at least) will be required by the IRB.

Note: CSEF may determine your project does not qualify for EZ Path. See exclusions above and contact us if there are questions.

UNRESTRICTED RESEARCH PATH

*Projects **MUST** conform with all ISEF and CSEF rules and regulations.*

FORMS REQUIRED

- Checklist for adult sponsor (online)
- Registration Form (online)
- Research Plan (online)
- Release Form (online)

AND THE FOLLOWING, AS APPROPRIATE:

	Form Title	Purpose
2C	Research Institution	For student research conducted in a regulated research institution or industrial setting
2B	Qualified Scientist	For projects involving human subjects, vertebrate animals, potentially hazardous biological agents. Submit prior to work
3	Risk Assessment	For projects using hazardous chemicals & biological substances, and hazardous activities or devices
4	Human Subject Form	For projects involving humans). Submit prior to work
5A/ 5B	Vertebrate Animals	For animal projects. Submit prior to work
6A/ 6B	Potentially Hazardous Biological Agents, Animal Tissue	Submit prior to work
7	Continuation Projects	

Form 2A - Student support disclosure form - required for all projects at time of project upload.

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Judging

Each awards category is judged by its own judging panel. Because of this, the number of judges examining each project can vary greatly. If the project is seen by only the regular fair awards judges (and this would be an exceptional case) up to eight judges would view the work. Usually, however, the project is of interest to several groups. For example, a project addressing the use of trash as a source of energy and making heavy use of mathematical techniques and computers could be judged by the applied technology, environmental, energy, mathematics, sustainability, and computer science judging panels in addition to the fair's regular physical awards category and the special awards. Check your top three applicable scientific/engineering discipline boxes when you complete your online registration. Judging chairs have the final word on projects they will consider.

Judging is conducted in two steps. Preliminary judging takes place during Week 1. Preliminary judging interviews will take place during preassigned times. Projects selected as finalists will be posted by Friday evening on the CSEF website and are required to be present for the finalist judging held during Week 2. During finalist judging, the competitors will be interviewed, possibly by judges from multiple categories and special awards.

Judging Criteria

1. **Research Question (10 pts)**

Science Research
- Clear and focused purpose of the project
- Identifies contribution to field of study
- Testable using scientific methods

Engineering
- Description and articulation of a practical need or problem to be solved
- Definition of criteria (for success and/or failure) for proposed solution
- Definition and explanation of constraints and/or assumptions

2. **Design and Methodology** (15 pts)

Science Research
- Well-designed plan and data collection methods
- Variables and controls defined, appropriate and complete

Engineering
- Exploration of alternatives to answer need or problem
- Identification and description of a solution
- Development of a prototype/model

3. **Execution: Data Collection, Analysis, & Interpretation** (20 pts)

Science Research
- Systematic data collection and analysis
- Reproducibility of results
- Appropriate application of analytical and statistical methods
- Sufficient data collected to support interpretation and conclusions

Engineering
- Prototype demonstrates intended design criteria
- Prototype has been tested in multiple conditions/trials
- Prototype demonstrates engineering skill and completeness

4. **Creativity** (20 pts)
- Project demonstrates significant novelty and innovation in one or more of the above criteria

5. **Presentation** (35 pts)

Poster (10 pts)
- Logical organization of material
- Clarity of graphics and legends
- Supporting documentation displayed

Interview (25 pts)
- Clear, concise, and thoughtful responses to questions
- Understanding of fundamental science relevant to project
- Understanding of interpretation and limitations of results and conclusions
- Clear demonstration of independence in conducting the project
- Recognition of potential impact and application to related or distant scientific fields, society and/or economics
- Thoughtful and thorough discussion of potential future work
- For team projects, contributions to and understanding of project by all members

The Judging Process

Regular & Special Category Awards

Judging the number and quality of projects represented at the Connecticut Science & Engineering Fair is a challenging and demanding task, and every effort is made to ensure that each project receives due consideration. Judges are drawn from a wide range of technical disciplines representing the highest professional levels of schools and colleges, industry, technical societies and scientific government agencies. Recent science fair alumni who are pursuing their college studies are enlisted as judges to take advantage of their unique perspective.

Special Awards

Because of the specific subject emphasis of the special awards, the judging criteria for the special awards are defined by the sponsoring organization to reflect that emphasis. Judging for special awards is carried out separately, and involves judges familiar with, or drawn from, the sponsoring organization. The subject emphasis, different criteria, and separate judging all result in the presentation of special awards to a wide range of projects from across the fair. A list of those receiving special awards at the Saturday ceremonies will be posted on the CSEF website. Students must attend the awards ceremony to receive their awards.

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Experiment-based Research

Research is a process by which people discover or create new knowledge about the world in which they live. The ISEF and Affiliated Fairs are research (data) driven. Students should develop research plans that provide quantitative data through experimentation followed by analysis and application of that data. Projects that are demonstrations, 'library' research or informational projects, 'explanation' models or kit building are not appropriate for research-based science fairs.

Questioning is probably the most important part of a scientific investigation and is often followed by an "if…then" statement. Students are encouraged to design 'controlled' experiments, ones that allow them to set up a standard and then change only one variable at a time to see how that variable might affect the original condition tested as the standard. Thus, questioning usually leads to experiments or observations. The following strategies listed below may help you produce a good scientific experiment:

- Be curious, choose a limited subject, ask a question; identify or originate/define a problem. It is important that this question be a 'testable' question – one in which data is taken and used to find the answer. A testable question can further be identified as one in which one or more variables can be identified and tested to see the impact of that variable on the original set of conditions. The question should not merely be an 'information' question where the answer is obtainable through literature research.
- Review published materials related to your problem or question. This is called background research.
- Evaluate possible solutions and guess why you think it will happen (hypothesis).
- Experimental design (procedure). In designing the experiment, it is critical that only one variable – a condition that may affect the results of the experiment – is changed at a time. This makes the experiment a 'controlled' experiment.
- Challenge and test your hypothesis through your procedure of experimentation (data collection) and analysis of your data. Use graphs to help see patterns in the data.
- Draw conclusions based on empirical evidence from the experiment.
- New question(s) may arise from your conclusions. This sets the stage for another research project and the process repeats itself. The hypothesis often changes during the course of the experiment. Supporting or not supporting your hypothesis is secondary to what is learned and discovered during the research.

Application-based Projects

Not all areas of study are best served by hypothesis-based technical research. Because engineers, inventors, mathematicians, theoretical physicists, and computer programmers have different objectives than those of other scientists, they follow a different process in their work. The process that they use to answer a question or solve a problem is different depending on their area of study. Each one uses their own criteria to arrive at a solution.

Engineering. "Scientists try to understand how nature works; engineers create things that never were." An engineering project should state the engineering goals, the development process and the evaluation of improvements. Engineering projects may include the following:

- Define a need or "How can I make this better?"
- Develop or establish design criteria (could be more than one).
- Do background research and search the literature to see what has already been done or what products already exist that fill a similar need. What makes them good and what makes them weak?
- Prepare preliminary designs and a materials list. Consider costs, manufacturing and user requirements.
- Build and test a prototype of your best design. Consider reliability, repair and servicing.
- Retest and redesign as necessary. Product testing.
- Prepare your report and exhibit.

Computer Science. These often involve creating and writing new algorithms to solve a problem or improve on an existing algorithm. Simulations, models or 'virtual reality' are other areas on which to conduct research.

Mathematics - Applied Analytics. Math is the language of science, technology, engineering, and even business. It can be used to explain existing phenomena and results and to predict future trends. The arrival of the digital age and advances in computing power provide an opportunity to use and analyze data obtained from many different sources. Projects might include developing or using models that enable conclusions, identify correlations and/or predictions using data analysis, probability, statistics, filtering and trending techniques, designs and tools.

Theoretical. Theoretical projects may involve thought experiments, proof of existing theories, development/proof of new theories, formation of concepts, or design of a mathematical model.

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Elements of a Successful Project

1. **Project Data Book.** A project data book is your most treasured piece of work. Accurate and detailed notes make a logical and winning project. Good notes show consistency and thoroughness to the judges and will help you when writing your research paper. Data tables are also helpful. They may be a little 'messy' but be sure the quantitative data recorded is accurate and that units are included in the data tables. Make sure you date each entry.
2. **Research Paper.** A research paper should be prepared and available along with the project data book and any necessary forms or relevant written materials. A research paper helps organize data as well as thoughts. A good paper includes the following sections.
   a) Title Page and Table of Contents: The title page and table of contents allows the reader to follow the organization of the paper quickly.
   b) Introduction: The introduction sets the scene for your report. The introduction includes the purpose, your hypothesis, problem or engineering goals, an explanation of what prompted your research, and what you hoped to achieve.
   c) Materials and Methods: Describe in detail the methodology you used to collect data, make observations, design apparatus, etc. Your research paper should be detailed enough so that someone would be able to repeat the experiment from the information in your paper. Include detailed photographs or drawings of self-designed equipment. Only include this year's work.
   d) Results: The results include data and analysis. This should include statistics, graphs, pages with your raw collected data, etc.
   e) Discussion: This is the essence of your paper. Compare your results with theoretical values, published data, commonly held beliefs, and/or expected results. Include a discussion of possible errors. How did the data vary between repeated observations of similar events? How were your results affected by uncontrolled events? What would you do differently if you repeated this project? What other experiments should be conducted?
   f) Conclusions: Briefly summarize your results. State your findings in relationships of one variable with the other. Support those statements with empirical data (one average compared to the other average, for example). Be specific, do not generalize. Never introduce anything in the conclusion that has not already been discussed. Also mention any practical applications and possible areas for future research.
   g) Credits: You should always credit those who have assisted you, including individuals, businesses and educational or research institutions. Credits should appear in your report and not on your display board. Don't confuse credits with citations. Citations refer to the source of a figure, drawing or photo. See display rules 1B and 1C.
   h) References/Bibliography: Your reference list should include any documentation that is not your own (i.e. books, journal articles, websites). See an appropriate reference in your discipline for format or refer to the Instructions to Authors of the appropriate publication.
3. **Abstract.** After finishing research and experimentation, you need to write an abstract. The abstract needs to be a maximum of 250 words on one page. It also may include any possible research applications. Only minimal reference to previous work may be included. An abstract should include:
   a) Purpose of the experiment
   b) Procedures used
   c) Data, and conclusions

Abstract Submission

Prepare and edit your abstract as a word processing file. Once you reviewed with your advisor or parents, go online and paste it into the CSEF abstract form. It is important that your abstract be well written and free of spelling errors. We send the abstracts to the judges for review prior to the Fair, and to the media if you are an award winner.

Abstracts should be submitted **online**.

Ethics Statement

Honesty, objectivity, and avoidance of conflicts of interest are expected during every phase of the project. The project should reflect independent research done by the student(s) and presented in their own words with proper citation. The presentation of fraudulent data, the evidence of plagiarism, or the inappropriate use of AI are prohibited and grounds for the project to fail to qualify. Scientific fraud and misconduct are not condoned at any level of research or competition.

Fraudulent projects will be disqualified at the Connecticut Science and Engineering Fair or the ISEF. The full ethics statement is available on the CSEF website at: **www.ctsciencefair.org/regulations/ethics**

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Rules and Regulations

General

1. Original work- Projects must represent original work done by the student(s); Students will be judged only on research completed since the last CSEF and conducted over a maximum period of 12 months. *For 2027, the project must have been conducted for no more than 12 consecutive months in the range of January 2026-March 2027.* Display boards should show the current year's work only. Continuing research must include previous year'(s) abstract(s) and research plan(s), in a separate file.
2. A research plan and other forms as specified by the International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) are required for all projects. The Connecticut Science & Engineering Fair Research Plan must be submitted to the fair's scientific review committee with your registration form. Projects involving life science research and hazardous procedures require approval prior to the start of research. See: http://ctsciencefair.org/registration/research-plan
3. High school students may compete in only one International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) affiliated fair except when proceeding to a state fair from an affiliated regional fair as a finalist.
4. AI is an important tool to increase the quality and robustness of science and engineering research projects. Therefore, AI use disclosures must be provided for all projects. More details are available on the **website**.
5. Projects involving firearms, including BB and pellet guns, are not permitted at the Connecticut Science and Engineering Fair.
6. We maintain an **FAQ** with common Scientific Review and Registration issues.

Project Display

Connecticut Science & Engineering Fair requires that every project be displayed according to the same standards and in a fashion that assures the safety of the participants. Project display components are uploaded to the CSEF website for preliminary judging.

There are 4 **required** components and 2 **optional** components for uploading for preliminary judging:

Required components	Optional Components
• Abstract	• Research paper, research plan, and/or bibliography
• Scientific poster	• Laboratory notebook
• 3-minute supportive project video	
• Photograph	

At the Fair

1. Students must be present:
   - Online for preliminary judging. Times will be assigned.
   - In-person for finalist judging. Times will be assigned.
     - On Saturday if selected as a Finalist or Special Award winner. The only exceptions are for religious observances and such exceptions as approved by the Fair Director. Email requests to **director@ctsciencefair.org**
2. Cell phone use during judging is strictly prohibited and may result in disqualification.
3. An abstract describing the student's work, procedures, data, results, and conclusions is required.
4. A research report describing the student's work, procedures, data, results, and conclusions is optional. The report must be a clean copy. Graded Reports are not permitted.
5. A laboratory notebook with details of student work is optional, but highly encouraged.
6. Equipment (e.g., computers, oscilloscopes, video display terminals, playback devices', spectrographs) is optional.

Required Components

Required component #1: Abstract

An abstract is a brief, written explanation of the research project. The abstract contains a succinct description of the project's purpose, the procedures followed, the data collected, and the conclusions reached. This must all be accomplished in 250 words or less.

Every project at the Fair is required to have an abstract submitted as part of registration and on the project display board. In submitting the abstract, you are attesting that the nature of the work and your involvement is accurately described. If some portion is not your work, it should not be part of your abstract unless you cite the assistance. It is OK to receive help with the project but that help must be acknowledged.

Suggested components of an effective abstract:
Purpose of the Experiment. An introductory statement of the reason for investigating the topic of the project.
A statement of the problem or hypothesis being studied.
Procedures Used. A summarization of the key points and an overview of how the investigation was conducted. An abstract does not give details about the materials used unless it greatly influenced the procedure or had to be developed to do the investigation.
Observation/Data/Results. This section should provide key results that lead directly to the conclusions you have drawn. It should not give too many details about the results nor include tables or graphs.
Conclusions. Conclusions from the investigation should be described briefly. The summary paragraph should reflect on the process and possibly state some applications and extensions of the investigation.

For additional abstract guidelines please see the **website**.

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Required component #2: Scientific Poster

(required format: .pdf, .jpg, .png, .tif)

If you are creating a digitally-generated poster, convert to PDF prior to uploading. If you are creating a physical poster, photograph it lying flat. Do NOT photograph standing upright with side panels in - judges will be unable to properly view it, and may miss an important part of your project!

The purpose of the display is to show the results of an experiment, not to conduct the experiment. Rely on your display board and report to communicate the results and capture the judges' attention. Use written reports, tables, graphs, and photographs to show equipment details, its operation, and your results. Refer to display and safety regulations below for details.

Display Hints

Purpose of the Display

The purpose of the display is to describe your research work to the judges. The preliminary round of judging is your most important hurdle to overcome. At least one panel of judges (usually a group of three to five people) and sometimes (if your project is assigned multiple categories) as many as five panels of judges will review your work. Special Awards are judged in addition to the category judging.

Your job in preparing your display is to present the research aspects of your work as clearly and concisely as possible. A great project may escape the judges' attention if key elements are not presented or are buried in the back of a notebook.

What to Upload

Judges are looking for a description of what you set out to do, how you did it, special apparatus that you might have developed, your data, your interpretation of your data, results, and conclusions. For many projects all of this can be displayed using a poster display with key references, previous work, and a research report to provide details that are too complex for the poster. Some projects, such as those dealing with computer software, will need special treatment to convey the importance of the work without having the computer present. The test is whether you can get your point across to an audience. The fact that you used a computer to model a process or compile your results does not mean that you need the computer at the fair to make your point. Of course, if your result is the operation of software that you developed, then you need to show typical results, pictures of computer screens, a description of the code that you wrote, etc. If a model that you built is important to telling the story, then you might choose to display it. Photographs of delicate specimens and your experimental setup, will enhance your story.

Please note: *For 2027, Preliminary judging will be virtual and finalist judging will be in-person.*

In-person Display Space

Everyone gets the same space allocation and not an inch more, no matter what. Only table space is provided. Your project must not be higher than 78 inches when measured from the table top. The width is limited to 48 inches and the depth to 30 inches. Size includes anything that you bring to the Fair. If your display needs a brace, or an easel, the space that these items occupy is included in the size measurement. Prior to the fair, set up your project at home and check the dimensions. We are serious about the size limitations, so you should work out any problems in advance.

In-person Display Construction

The overall size (within fair restrictions) is up to you. Big displays don't necessarily mean good projects. Use whatever space it takes to tell your story. There are ready-made inexpensive posters for sale. Again, the choice is yours. Some schools have reusable posters, check and see. You can purchase very nice posters. Your display must be free-standing! There are no walls to lean your display against and if you plan on propping it up against the display behind you, forget it!

In-person Lettering

Determine the size of your lettering based on reading distance. Three feet is typically reading distance for a display. Some type size suggestions are:

- Project Titles, 2 inches high
- Subtitles, 0.5 inches high and
- Lettering, 0.25 inches high.

Make your title clear and easy to read. Avoid type styles that may be hard to read. Fonts that have shadows or outlines may seem like a great idea but they are harder to read than simple lettering. Computer generated lettering is easy and economical. The title lettering should be at least 2 inches high. Press-on letters work too.

What to include in virtual and in-person displays

There are few formal requirements for the display contents. It is up to you. Ideas are presented here to help get you started.

On the Poster

- ***Project purpose*** or, if it is an engineering project, state the ***goals***.
- ***Background*** or introduction describing briefly what has been done previously by others.
- ***Experimental plan or procedure***. For engineering projects provide design analysis, calculations, drawings, as appropriate.
- ***Results***. Best handled with brief summaries (leave the lengthy details for your notebook or research report with a footnote on the poster for where the judges should look). Graphs of data are best and are easier to interpret

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than tables full of numbers. A picture is really worth a thousand words.
- ***Conclusions***. Summarize your important findings.
- ***Discussion and applications***. A few words about ideas that you plan to explore (provided you're planning to continue the work) might be interesting. Applications of your work, especially if they are not obvious might be really exciting.
- All ***graphics* and *photographs*** must be labeled to cite the source of the material: yours or from a reference. Give information so the readers can locate the material for themselves.
- * ***You may include your Name and School Name on your poster***. Your name and school can also appear on your official CSEF abstract, journals, and report. Pictures of you working on your project are permitted.

What NOT to Include in Your Display

- ***Props***. Photographs are acceptable. You may wish to include a short demonstration in the optional video.
- ***Hazardous Materials.*** All chemicals should be left home. For more details, please read the rules and regulations one more time.

Required Component #3: 3-minute Supportive Project Video

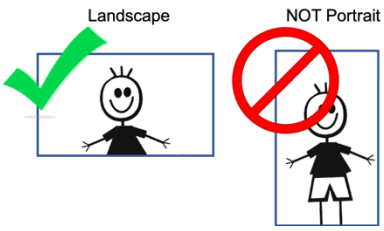
(required format: link only)

Required component #4: Photograph of student

(required format: .jpg, .png)

Have someone take a photograph of you or take one yourself, preferably conducting research. The photograph should include your entire face and is required to be taken in **landscape**, not portrait format. While the photograph may be of you with your poster, a candid shot conducting research is preferred.

- Demonstrate the function of your engineering invention
- Showcase the environment where you conducted your research, and, if pertinent, your contributions to the work
- Highlight the most significant results of your research
- Highlight the progression of your research from previous work in the related field



You may include a link to a 3-minute video that highlights the most significant findings of your research. This could provide you with an opportunity to describe one of more of the following:

Put in simpler terms, think of this video as an opportunity to make that 3-minute sales pitch to a group of investors that simply wants to know about the problem that you addressed, and what you did to solve it. Your video does not replace your poster, research paper, or notebook, but rather is supportive of those materials, and provides you with the opportunity to (self) explain the significance of your work to the judges. This video should NOT attempt to recap all of your research, since it is such a short period of time.

Guidelines for creating your video:

1. Maximum length is 3 minutes.
2. The CSEF website will only accept a **link** to the video: the video can be created as you wish, but must reside on the Internet (i.e., YouTube, Google Drive). If you upload to Google Drive, ensure that the video is set for view by "anyone with the link." Videos that are not accessible will not be viewed.
3. Do NOT speed up (to shorten) a video, so that it is 3 minutes long. These videos will simply be disregarded by the judges when reviewing your project materials

Optional Components

Optional Component #1: Research paper, research plan, and/or bibliography

(required format: pdf)

Provide a copy of your research paper, plan, and/or your bibliography. We do not have a required format for reference pages. Appropriate formats like APA and MLA are all acceptable.

Optional Component #2: Laboratory notebook

(required format: .pdf)

Scan a copy of your laboratory notebook or journal. You may include, but are not limited to, handwritten notes, annotated articles, data, additional graphs not on the poster, or photographs. If you maintain a digital notebook or journal that is also acceptable. Judges will be looking for evidence of authentic work to help them understand how you worked through your project.

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Display and Safety Regulations

Not Allowed at Project

1. Living organisms including plants, animals, microbes
2. Taxidermy specimens or parts
3. Preserved vertebrate or invertebrate animals
4. Human or animal food
5. Human/animal parts or body fluids (for example, blood, urine)
6. Plant materials (living, dead, or preserved) which are in their raw unprocessed, or non-manufactured state.
7. Laboratory/household chemicals including water (Exceptions: water integral to an enclosed apparatus; crystals grown by you, displayed in a sealed case, and removed after final judging)
8. All hazardous substances or devices (For example, poisons, drugs, controlled substances, firearms, weapons, ammunition, reloading devices, Class 3 and 4 lasers)
9. Dry ice or other sublimating solids
10. Sharp items (for example, syringes, needles, pipettes, knives)
11. Flames or highly flammable materials
12. Batteries with open-top cells
13. Awards, medals, business cards, flags, endorsements and/or acknowledgments (graphic or written) unless the item(s) are an integral part of the project
14. Photographs or other visual presentations depicting vertebrate animals in surgical techniques, dissections, necropsies, or other lab procedures
15. Active Internet or e-mail connections as part of displaying or operating the project at the CSEF
16. Prior years' written material or visual depictions on the vertical display board
17. Overlapping panels or pages on the poster are not permitted. Supporting detailed information should be contained in a data book or as part of the research report
18. Glass or glass objects unless deemed by the Display and Safety Committee to be an integral and necessary part of the project (Exception: glass that is an integral part of a commercial product such as a computer screen)
19. Any apparatus deemed unsafe by the Display & Safety Committee (e.g., large vacuum tubes or dangerous ray-generating devices, empty tanks that previously contained combustible liquids or gases, pressurized tanks).

Allowed at Project BUT with the Restrictions Indicated

1. Photographs and/or visual depictions if:

a. They are not deemed offensive or inappropriate by the Display and Safety Committee.

b. They have credit lines of origin ("Photograph taken by..." or Image taken from..."). If all photographs being displayed were taken by the participant or are from the same source, one credit line prominently and vertically displayed is sufficient.

c. They are from the Internet, magazines, newspapers, or journals and credit lines are attached. (If all photographs/images are from the same source, one credit prominently and placed on the poster is sufficient.)

d. They are photographs or visual depictions of the participant.

e. They are photographs of human participants for which signed consent forms are at the project or in the booth.

2. Soil, sand, rock and/or waste samples only if permanently encased in a slab of plastic or a sealed container.
3. Any apparatus with unshielded belts, pulleys, chains, or moving parts with tension or pinch points may not be operated.
4. Class 2M lasers:

a. May be operated only by the fair participant.

b. May be operated only during finalist judging.

c. Must be labeled with a sign reading "Laser Radiation: Do Not Stare Into Beam"

d. Must have protective housing that prevents physical and visual access to the beam.

e. Must be disconnected when not operating.

5. Class 3 and 4 lasers may not be operated.
6. Any apparatus producing temperatures that will cause physical burns must be adequately insulated and only operated during finalist judging.

Electrical Regulations

1. Bare wire and exposed knife switches may be used only in circuits of 12 volts or less.
2. All electrical connectors, (e.g., wiring, switches, extension cords, fuses) in high voltage circuits (over 12 volts) must be UL-listed and must be appropriate for the load and equipment. Connections must be soldered or made with UL-listed connectors. Wiring, switches, and metal parts must have adequate insulation and overcurrent safety devices (such as fuses) and must be inaccessible to anyone but the fair participant. Exposed electrical equipment or metal that is liable to be energized must be grounded or shielded with a grounded metal box or cage to prevent accidental contact. There must be an accessible, clearly visible on/off switch or other means of disconnect from the power source. Maximum is 500 watts, 120 volts A.C.
3. Finalists requiring 120 volt A.C. electrical power must provide a UL-listed 3-wire extension cord which is appropriate for the load and equipment.

Only Table Top Displays are Allowed

Maximum Size of Display

30 in. (76 cm) deep
48 in. (122 cm) wide
78 in. (198 cm) high from table

For Questions Regarding Display Rules
Contact: **director@ctsciencefair.org**

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2026 Participating Towns and Schools

Avon
- Avon High School
- Avon Old Farms School
- Talcott Mountain Academy

Bethel
- Bethel High School

Bozrah
- Fields Memorial School

Bridgeport
- Barnum Public School
- Bridgeport Regional Aquaculture Center
- Central High School
- Fairchild Wheeler-Aerospace
- Fairchild Wheeler-Biotech
- Fairchild Wheeler-IT
- Geraldine Claytor Magnet Academy
- Geraldine Johnson School
- Harding High School
- Interdistrict Discovery Magnet School
- John Winthrop School
- Multicultural Magnet School
- Theodore Roosevelt School

Bristol
- St. Matthew School

Cheshire
- Cheshire Academy
- Cheshire High School
- St. Bridget School

Danbury
- Immaculate High School
- Saint Gregory the Great School
- Saint Joseph School
- Westside Middle School Academy
- Wooster School

Darien
- Darien High School

East Lyme
- East Lyme High School

Ellington
- Ellington Middle School

Enfield
- Academy of Computer Science & Engineering
- Chiaravalle Academy

Fairfield
- Fairfield College Preparatory School
- Fairfield Warde High School
- Fairfield Woods Middle School

Farmington
- Farmington High School
- Irving A. Robbins Middle School
- Miss Porter's School

Forestville
- St Matthew School

Glastonbury
- Glastonbury High School

Greenwich
- Brunswick School
- Central Middle School
- Eastern Middle School
- Greenwich Academy
- Greenwich Catholic School
- Greenwich Country Day School
- Greenwich High School
- Sacred Heart Greenwich
- Western Middle School

Hamden
- Hamden Hall Country Day School
- Sacred Heart Academy

Lakeville
- Indian Mountain School
- The Hotchkiss School

Manchester
- Manchester High School
- Saint James School

Middletown
- Xavier High School

Milford
- Platt Technical High School

Montville
- Puryear Homeschool
- Saint Bernard School

New Canaan
- New Canaan High School

New Haven
- Engineering and Science University Magnet School
- Foote School
- Hopkins School
- Sound School
- Wilbur Cross High School
- Worthington Hooker School

Newtown
- Hughes Homeschool

North Haven
- Slate School

Norwich
- Norwich Technical High School

Pawcatuck
- St. Michael School

Redding
- CT STEM Foundation
- Joel Barlow High School

Ridgefield
- Ridgefield High School

Rocky Hill
- Rocky Hill High School

Salem
- Salem School

Shelton
- Shelton Intermediate School

Simsbury
- Simsbury High School

South Windsor
- South Windsor High School

Southington
- Southington High School

Stamford
- Bi-Cultural Hebrew Academy
- King School
- Laurel Springs School

Storrs
- E. O. Smith High School

Stratford
- St. Mark's School

Suffield
- Suffield High School

Thomaston
- Thomaston High School

Torrington
- Oliver Wolcott Technical High School

Trumbull
- Agriscience and Biotechnology Center
- Christian Heritage School

Wallingford
- Choate Rosemary Hall

Waterbury
- ACES at Chase

Watertown
- Taft School

West Hartford
- Kingswood Oxford School
- William H Hall High School

Weston
- Weston Middle School

Westport
- Greens Farms Academy
- Staples High School

Willimantic
- Windham Technical High School

Wilton
- Middlebrook School
- Wilton High School

Windsor
- Academy of Aerospace Engineering
- Madina Academy
- The Loomis Chaffee School

Woodbridge
- Amity High School

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Wynn Müller, Phoenix Home Life (retired), *Registration Advisor*

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Brad Guilani, Otis Elevator, *Physical Sciences Chair*
Steve Kerr, Boehringer Ingelheim, *Life Science Chair*

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Spencer Sloan, Spencer Sloan Photography
Andrew Bramante, Greenwich High School

Database & Computer Operations
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Ernest Gagnon, United Technologies Research Center (retired)
Bruce Zepke, UTC Power (retired)

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Robert Erickson, University of Connecticut (retired), *Layout Advisor*

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Dr. Charles Dimmick, CT Asso Conservation & Wetlands Commissioners
Maya Geradi, Yale University, *Chair*
Jon Hill, Boehringer Ingelheim
Peter Hoover, Raytheon Corporation (retired)
Alice Martin, UIL Holdings Corporation
Diana McCarthy-Bercury, Earth Forward Group
John Morgan, Aecon (retired)
Kristi Moore, Alexion, AstraZeneca Rare Disease
Elizabeth Peterson, General Dynamics Electric Boat
Samantha Schopfer, Lawrence + Memorial Hospital
Alan Siniscalchi, CT Asso Conservation & Wetlands Commissioners

International Science & Engineering Fair Coordination
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Website Development & Maintenance
Michel Leask, Bozrah Public Schools (retired)
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