

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As an Ohio STEM Designated School, Mater Dei Academy is committed to integrating science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) throughout our curriculum. A key component of this commitment is the annual 7th and 8th Grade Science Fair.



The Science Fair is not an optional activity. It is an essential academic requirement that gives students the opportunity to apply the scientific method, collect and analyze data, and draw evidence-based conclusions. These skills are fundamental to STEM education and are critical for success in high school and beyond.

Because of its importance, the Science Fair will be treated as a major graded assignment. Students will be evaluated on each stage of the project, including question development, background research, experimental design, data collection, analysis, and final presentation. This project is cross-curricular and may impact grades in multiple classes, including Science, Technology, and Language Arts. Students who fail to complete the project or who do not demonstrate an acceptable level of effort and quality should expect this to significantly affect their grades and may result in failing the semester.

In past years, some projects were approved even though they relied on subjective opinions, such as determining which product "looks better," "tastes better," or "smells better." Going forward, only projects that can be evaluated objectively will be approved, projects based primarily on opinions or preferences will not be accepted.

As a STEM Designated School, we are expected to provide students with authentic scientific experiences. Real science is based on measurable evidence, not personal opinion. By requiring objective experiments, we are ensuring that students engage in meaningful scientific inquiry and develop the critical thinking skills expected in a rigorous STEM program.

Parents are encouraged to support students by helping them stay organized, gather materials, and meet deadlines. However, the work itself must be completed by the student.

We are sharing this information at the end of the current school year so that parents and guardians can help their children begin thinking about possible project ideas over the summer. Families can use this time to discuss potential topics, gather materials, and plan ahead. Formal work on the Science Fair will begin within the first two weeks of the next school year.

We are pleased to share that Mater Dei Academy will once again be partnering with Lubrizol, a global specialty chemical company headquartered right here in Wickliffe. In fact, Lubrizol's headquarters sits directly across the street from our school, making this a truly local partnership we are proud to build on. Last year, Lubrizol hosted a single meeting with our students, which was a great first step. This year, we are expanding that relationship significantly. While students will continue to do all of the work on their own projects, Lubrizol scientists and engineers will be available at multiple points throughout the year to provide expert guidance and support.

The first meeting is scheduled for August 31, 2026, earlier in the school year than in past years. During this session, students will be grouped by the scientific area they are considering for their project and matched with a Lubrizol professional in that field. A student exploring a chemistry-related question, for example, would be paired with a Lubrizol chemist. The goal of this initial meeting is to help students think through ideas, ask questions of a real scientist, and begin narrowing their focus.

After the August meeting, students will have two weeks to reflect on that conversation and begin shaping their project ideas. Those ideas will be shared with Lubrizol in advance of a second meeting, scheduled for September 16 through 18, 2026. During this session, students will work with their assigned mentor to finalize their project direction and develop a clear, testable hypothesis.

A third connection point is planned for October 12, 2026, when students will share a progress update with their Lubrizol mentor. This mid-project check-in is designed to give students an opportunity to reflect on what they have learned so far and receive guidance before completing their work. The Science Fair itself is currently scheduled for January 14, 2027. We are confident that these three meaningful interactions with Lubrizol professionals will make a real difference in the quality and depth of our students' projects.

Thank you for your support as we maintain the high academic standards expected of Mater Dei Academy students. The Science Fair is an important opportunity for students to practice scientific thinking and demonstrate their understanding of the scientific process. We are excited about what this year's expanded partnership with Lubrizol means for our students, and we look forward to seeing the work they produce with the support of our neighbors across the street.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Mullins, science teacher

Mr. Goth, technology teacher

Mrs. Battaglia, language arts teacher

Mrs. Trunk, principal