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Virginia Middle School Students Take on NASA Engineering Challenges

Students at nine Virginia middle schools will take on after-school engineering challenges designed by NASA as part of a national initiative to promote science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) in schools and in the work force.

The students — using the engineering-design process and interacting with NASA experts — will attempt to solve real-world challenges facing the national space agency, including how to assist astronauts in peril, how to successfully parachute a spacecraft onto the surface of Mars and how to pack for a visit to the Moon. Students will have eight weeks beginning in February to brainstorm, design, build and create videos documenting their efforts and their solutions. Entries from each school are due on April 16 and winners will be announced on May 1.

Virginia is one of ten states chosen by NASA and the U.S. Department of Education to participate in the [2014-2015 Engineering Design Challenge](#). The participating middle schools — selected by the Virginia Department of Education based on NASA criteria — are all home to federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Center programs and are as follows:

- Caroline Middle in Caroline County
- Falling Creek Middle in Chesterfield County
- Holmes Middle and Key Middle in Fairfax County
- Peabody Middle in Petersburg
- Thomas H. Henderson Middle and Thomas C. Boushall Middle in Richmond
- Stonewall Jackson Middle in Roanoke
- Southampton Middle in Southampton County

Authorized under the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*, the 21st Century Community Learning Center program provides students with tutoring and enrichment activities that complement regular academic programs outside regular school hours. In addition the program offers literacy and other educational services to the families of participating children.

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