



SCIENTISTS TAKING ASTRONOMY TO RURAL SCHOOLS

Dear Education Leader,

At the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, we spend our days studying the universe and expanding our understanding of it. But just as important is ensuring that this sense of discovery is accessible to students everywhere.

Across rural America, millions of students grow up under some of the nation's darkest and clearest night skies. These skies can be powerful classrooms for discovery.

Smithsonian STARS was created with this opportunity in mind. Made possible through generous gifts from donors and key partners like Celestron, the program brings scientific tools and resources to rural schools at no cost. We're on a mission to inspire the next generation of explorers by expanding access to and understanding of the spectacular night skies that shine over rural America.

We believe *the sky belongs to everyone*, and that *curiosity has no zip code*. Our work is grounded in the idea that where a student lives should not limit their ability to explore and engage with science. Through telescopes, standards-aligned lessons, and ongoing educator support, STARS aims to bring astronomy education and hands-on scientific learning into rural classrooms.

Astronomy has a unique ability to spark wonder and awe in our natural world. The questions students explore about the night sky are a powerful entry point towards science, technology, engineering, and math. Our goal is not only to spark interest, but to support sustained engagement that encourages lifelong STEM learning.

This work is only possible through long-term collaboration. Educators and school leaders are essential partners in bringing these experiences to life in classrooms and communities. We welcome the opportunity to work alongside you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Emma Marcucci
Executive Director, Smithsonian STARS





SCIENTISTS TAKING ASTRONOMY TO RURAL SCHOOLS

Smithsonian STARS is a long-term collaboration with rural schools to expand access to high-quality STEM learning. By empowering and partnering with educators, we aim to create a pathway to lifelong STEM learning for students in rural America.

Every Participating School gets



**A Celestron
NexStar 6SE
Telescope**



**Educator Training
led by Smithsonian
Scientists**



**Standards-
aligned K-12
Lesson Plans**



**Community
Star Parties**

Why Schools Participate

- Hands-on STEM learning using real astronomy tools
- Flexible implementation across classrooms, clubs and events
- No prior astronomy experience required
- Ongoing access to STARS resources and opportunities
- Offered at no cost to schools and districts

What We Ask of You

- Use the telescope to facilitate activities with students and the community
- Coordinate with the STARS team during your visit window
- Review and utilize provided resources
- Engage with a nationwide community of STARS rural educators

Bring STARS to Your Schools

We invite educators to apply by scanning the QR code or by visiting smithsonianstars.si.edu/enroll.

