

3M and Discovery Education announce 37 State Merit Winners and four Honorable Mentions in 2026 3M Young Scientist Challenge

Nation's premier middle school science competition recognizes innovation student solutions across robotics, safety and climate technology

ST. PAUL, Minn. and CHARLOTTE, N.C., July 1, 2026 /PRNewswire/ -- 3M and Discovery Education today announced the 2026 3M Young Scientist Challenge's 37 State Merit Winners and four Honorable Mention recipients. As the nation's premier middle school science competition, the 3M Young Scientist Challenge features outstanding innovations from young scientists who demonstrate the power of science to improve the world.

To enter the competition, students in fifth through eighth grade may submit a brief video explaining their original idea to solve an everyday problem using science. The videos are evaluated for creativity, scientific knowledge and communication skills. This year's entries featured solutions in a variety of categories, including robotics, home improvement, automotive, safety, AR/VR and climate technology.

"The 3M Young Scientist Challenge highlights how students use science and creativity to solve real-world problems, said William Brown, 3M Chairman and CEO. "At 3M, we're focused on supporting these young innovators as they develop their ideas and apply them in ways that can deliver measurable impact."

Each year, the 3M Young Scientist Challenge recognizes a grand prize winner, 10 finalists, four Honorable Mentions and up to 51 State Merit Winners – in all 50 states and Washington, D.C. The 37 State Merit Winners and 4 Honorable Mention recipients for this year's competition were selected based on their passion for science and innovation, and superb communication skills. Each State Merit Winner receives special recognition on the challenge website, along with a prize pack.

The 2026 3M Young Scientist Challenge State Merit Winners are listed below in alphabetical order by state:

[Alaska] Sage Riley Brothers, Homeschooled, N/A
[Arizona] Akshay Lakshminarasimhan, BASIS Scottsdale, BASIS Charter Schools Inc.
[California] Kyle Xu, The Harker School - Middle School Campus, Campbell Union School District
[Colorado] Vedanth Raju, Aurora Quest K-8, Aurora Public Schools
[Connecticut] Cayden Joseph, Engineering and Science University Magnet School, New Haven Public Schools
[Delaware] Reena Vaishnavi Neetipalli, Cab Calloway School of the Arts, Red Clay Consolidated School District
[Florida] Arshiya Ghosh, Starkey Ranch K-8, Pasco County
[Georgia] Siddhant Mahapatra, Dodgen Middle School, Cobb County School District
[Hawaii] James Beecroft, Our Savior Lutheran School, Aiea, Hawaii
[Iowa] Leen Idrees, Southeast Middle School, Iowa City Community School District
[Illinois] Kyrha Shah, Gordon Gregory Middle School, Indian Prairie Community Unit School District 204
[Indiana] Aarsh Sahu, Creekside Middle School, Carmel Clay Schools
[Kansas] Vidhi Mishra, California Trail Middle School, Olathe Public Schools
[Kentucky] Liam Baldwin, Belfry Middle School, Pike County Schools
[Massachusetts] Yaroslava Kazakova, Plymouth South Middle School, Plymouth Public Schools
[Maryland] Krish Janoria, Hallie Wells Middle School, Montgomery County Public Schools
[Maine] Ryder Tu, Reeds Brook Middle School, Regional School Unit 22
[Michigan] Adhrit Mishra, Avondale GATE Magnet School, Avondale
[Minnesota] Agastya Pande, Chippewa Middle School, Mounds View Public Schools
[Missouri] TingMing Tsai, Ladue Middle School, Ladue School District
[North Carolina] Prakhar Purohit, The Math and Science Academy of Apex, The Math and Science Academy of Apex (Charter school in Wake County - NCES District ID 3700482)
[Nebraska] Vihaan Manikya, Millard North Middle School, Millard Public Schools
[New Hampshire] Sharwin Balagurumoorthy, Homeschooled, N/A
[New Jersey] Nithya Tammana, Monroe Township Middle School, Monroe Township School District
[New York] Sofia Allyson Ignacio, Hillside Grade School, New Hyde Park - Garden City City Park Union Free School District
[Ohio] Harshith Nelabhotla, Strongsville Middle School, Strongsville City School District
[Oklahoma] Umar Aslam, Casady, Oklahoma County

[Oregon] Albert Liu, Willamette Valley Academy, Beaverton – Private School
[Pennsylvania] Ahana Paul, Downingtown Middle School, Downingtown Area School District
[South Carolina] Amita Barik, Sterling School Charles Townes Center, Greenville County School District
[Tennessee] Anisha Nachnani, University School of Nashville, Davidson County
[Texas] Timothy Chong, St. Mark's School of Texas, Dallas – Private School
[Utah] Rohan Damarla, Challenger School, Lehi – Private School
[Virginia] Ishanvi Sakharpe, Old Donation School, Virginia Beach City Public Schools
[Washington] Kapish Arora, Maywood Middle School, Issaquah School District
[Wisconsin] Aarav Malinowski, Wisconsin Hills Middle School, Elmbrook
[West Virginia] Preethi Nethi, West Virginia Academy, Monongalia

Each year, the 3M Young Scientist Challenge also recognizes select entrants with an Honorable Mention award. These individuals were selected for their unique and innovative concepts and effective communication skills. The four 2026 3M Young Scientist Challenge Honorable Mention recipients are as follows in alphabetical order by last name:

Darsh Goel, Mountain House, Calif., Peter Hansen Elementary, Lammersville Unified School District
Kishan Kumar, Sammamish, Wash., Basis Independent Bellevue, Bellevue
Ayan Roychowdhury, Menlo Park, Calif., Sacred Heart Schools, San Mateo
Ashwin Sundaresan, San Diego, Calif., Oak Valley Middle School, Poway Unified School District

"When students see how science connects to the world around them, they stop memorizing and start believing they can make a difference," said Brian Shaw, chief executive officer at Discovery Education. "The 3M Young Scientist Challenge gives young people the real-world relevance that fuels deep STEM learning and the persistence to see an idea through. Congratulations to every student honored this year. The world is better for the creativity and determination you bring."

Previous 3M Young Scientist Challenge winners

Now in its 19th year, the 3M Young Scientist Challenge continues to inspire and challenge middle school students to think creatively and apply the power of STEM to discover real-world solutions. America's Top Young Scientists have given TED Talks, filed patents, founded nonprofits, appeared on Forbes 30 Under 30 list and exhibited at the White House Science Fair. In addition, a 3M Young Scientist Challenge Alumni Network was formed in fall 2022 and includes more than 100 former challenge winners, finalists and mentors, who take part in networking opportunities and more.

Learning resources for all educators and students

The 3M Young Scientist Challenge is complemented by Young Scientist Lab, a free digital resource program from 3M and Discovery Education that gives every student access to standards-aligned, hands-on science experiences designed to spark curiosity and build STEM skills. Students, teachers and families of all skill levels can transform and innovate the world around them. Young Scientist Lab resources are also available through Discovery Education Experience, the essential companion for engaged PreK-12 classrooms.

To learn more about the 3M Young Scientist Challenge and meet the 2026 competitors, visit [YoungScientistLab.com](https://www.YoungScientistLab.com).


About 3M

3M (NYSE: MMM) is focused on transforming industries around the world by applying science and creating innovative, customer-focused solutions. Our multi-disciplinary team is working to solve tough customer problems by leveraging diverse technology platforms, differentiated capabilities, global footprint, and operational excellence. Discover how 3M is shaping the future at [3M.com/news](https://www.3M.com/news).

About Discovery Education

Discovery Education is a global education technology leader whose innovative solutions empower educators and progress student learning. Discovery Education's solutions have served more than 100 million students globally, supporting effective teaching and learning in 45% of U.S. K-12 schools and in 100+ countries and territories. The company's portfolio includes award-winning core and supplemental curriculum, high-quality standards-aligned content, and AI-enabled teaching and learning tools. Solutions span math, science, literacy, social studies, and career-connected learning, including instructionally-aligned content developed through one-of-a-kind partnerships with industry leaders to bring real-world relevance into every lesson.

Learn more at www.DiscoveryEducation.com.

Additional assets available online:  [Photos \(1\)](#)

<https://news.3m.com/2026-07-01-3M-and-Discovery-Education-announce-37-State-Merit-Winners-and-four-Honorable-Mentions-in-2026-3M-Young-Scientist-Challenge>