Our History

Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy®
Our Mission

The mission of IMSA, the world’s leading teaching and learning laboratory for imagination and inquiry, is to ignite and nurture creative, ethical scientific minds that advance the human condition, through a system distinguished by profound questions, collaborative relationships, personalized experiential learning, global networking, generative use of technology and pioneering outreach.

IMSA History 1982–1991

1982

IMSA idea inspired by Dr. Leon Lederman, Dr. Walter Massey and the Valley Industrial Association

1983

Friends of Fermilab and the Corridor Partnership for Excellence in Education convene curriculum design workshop; participants propose IMSA

1984

Dr. Leon Lederman and Governor James R. Thompson lead efforts to establish IMSA

1985

IMSA established by Illinois General Assembly to “offer a uniquely challenging education for students talented in the areas of mathematics and science” and “serve the school system of the State as a catalyst and laboratory for the advancement of teaching”

Board of Trustees appointed

1986

Dr. Stephanie Pace Marshall named Founding President

Charter students recruited and selected, Charter staff hired

Charter Class of 210 students enrolls; a pioneering educational community is born

IMSA Fund for Advancement of Education, a not-for-profit foundation, established
IMSA unveils Integrative Learning System for curriculum development

Academic program emphasizes "integrative ways of knowing"

Students and staff hold class in the State Capitol to underscore the promise of Illinois' investment

Supplemental appropriation by Illinois General Assembly sustains IMSA's growth

IMSA launches programs for other Illinois schools, teachers and students

Furnas Foundation becomes IMSA's first private sector donor

Academic program emphasizes "apprentice investigation"

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IMSA reaches three-class capacity (sophomores, juniors and seniors); 509 students enroll

Annual recognition program started to honor students' home school teachers

Budget authority transferred to the Illinois Board of Higher Education

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Mentorship program established

First senior class earns top ACT scores in the nation, captures many academic, cocurricular and scholarship awards (subsequent classes earn similar honors)

Charter Class graduates

IMSA dedicated to the People of Illinois

Since 1989, students have conducted original investigations with world-class researchers and scholars. Students share their investigation results through publications and presentations.

First longitudinal study of IMSA graduates reveals positive results

Board approves revolutionary strategic plan for curriculum, instruction, assessment and statewide alliances

IMSA goes online with the world, establishes a direct Internet connection

Each year, thousands of Illinois children participate in IMSA summer and school-year programs.

Dr. Leon Lederman and IMSA Fund Directors James Pearson, James Thompson, Robert Malott and Michael Birck join IMSA President Dr. Stephanie Pace Marshall to commemorate the Academy’s achievements at the 10th Anniversary Gala in September 1996.

IMSA students named only pre-college presenters at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research

State and national experts conduct unique accreditation review; cite IMSA as leader and exemplar

Minority student enrollment doubles

IMSA establishes Center for Problem-Based Learning

Board approves innovative system of faculty development and accountability

IMSA embraces bold mission to transform mathematics and science teaching and learning through connections

IMSA identity evolves from “school” to “educational laboratory,” research and statewide service programs increase

IMSA pilots school-based partnerships to transform teaching and learning in Illinois

Calculus-based Physics Study advances national understanding of gender issues in math and science

IMSA Alumni Association established

Students launch CD-ROM interactive science magazine for elementary students

Integrated Science, Mathematical Investigations, Problem-Based Learning and other initiatives serve Illinois educators and IMSA students

Reinvention process increases program personalization, flexibility, rigor and coherence to enhance student learning

The Harris Family Foundation becomes first million dollar+ donor

IMSA commemorates 10th Anniversary, launches second decade

1992

1993

1994

1995

1996
**Prometheus Books** publishes *Portraits of Great American Scientists*, authored by IMSA students.

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Business Plan for second decade developed to advance IMSA’s capacity for growth and influence.</td>
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<td>1998</td>
<td>Nobel Laureate Dr. Leon Lederman becomes IMSA’s first Resident Scholar, leads IMSA Great Minds Program.</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>Grainger Center for Imagination and Inquiry and Tellabs Studio for Professional Development open.</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>IMSA Kids Institute creates Science Explorers summer camp for young students.</td>
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<td>2001</td>
<td>Young IMSA graduate gives $500,000 to IMSA Fund for Advancement of Education to “contribute back to IMSA’s success.”</td>
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- **Grainger Center for Imagination and Inquiry** opens in 1998. Each year, IMSA delivers professional development to educators throughout Illinois and beyond.
- **Tellabs Studio for Professional Development** opens in 1998. Each year, IMSA delivers professional development to educators throughout Illinois and beyond.
- **Dr. Donald Dosch and Susan Eddins** were the first of seven faculty members to be recognized for the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards certification.
- **Problems as Possibilities**, authored by IMSA staff, published by Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- **Washington University in St. Louis** holds a symposium in 1999.
- **Smithsonian Research and Diffusion Network** established to help schools implement IMSA innovations.
- **New core science program, Scientific Inquiries**, engages students in investigating significant questions.
- **IMSA Excellence 2000+ math and science enrichment program for Illinois middle school students** begins.

**In 2001**

- **Prometheus Books** publishes *Portraits of Great American Scientists*, authored by IMSA students.
- **IMSA-Benedictine University** pilot alternative teacher certification program begins.
- **Seven IMSA faculty** recognized for National Board of Professional Teaching Standards certification.
- **IMSA launches Illinois International Career Academy** for high school students.
- **Inspiring Minds: The Illinois Promise** public-private partnership campaign begins.
U.S. Department of Education funds IMSA’s 21st Century Information Fluency program to improve Internet-based research skills of Illinois educators and students.

IMSA names its first residence hall – Harris Hall – to honor Bette and the late Neison Harris, the largest donors to the IMSA Fund.

Unprecedented reduction in state funding forces significant staffing and program cuts; IMSA trailblazers rally to preserve academic integrity and distinctiveness, rebuild and continue meeting critical state needs.

Science Literacy for the Twenty-First Century, published by Prometheus Books and edited by IMSA leaders, honors Dr. Leon Lederman’s legacy with featured essays by noted scientists and science educators.

IMSA hosts International Problem-Based Learning Symposium for educational leaders and practitioners in Illinois and beyond.

Illinois State Board of Education awards grant to IMSA to administer rapidly-growing Illinois Virtual High School.

IMSA President’s Alumni Advisory Council established to provide strategic counsel on “next generation IMSA.”

Five-member U.S. team, including an IMSA student, ranks first of 54 nations in 34th International Physics Olympiad.

IMSA embraces a new strategic goal – to be the chosen provider and partner for innovative programs that develop talent and leadership in mathematics, science and technology.

State of Illinois invests in new state-of-the-art science complex that includes laboratories, classrooms and a multipurpose atrium.

The Wall Street Journal names IMSA among the top educational institutions in its ranking of schools with high success rates in sending students to Ivy League and highly competitive colleges and universities.

IMSA is the only educational institution in the nation to produce two of the top 10 scholarship winners in the 64th Intel Science Talent Search.

With a major gift from Virginia B. Cherry, IMSA launches Total Applied Learning for Entrepreneurs (TALENT), stimulating and supporting students’ entrepreneurial projects.

Student Inquiry at IMSA featured in the National Science Teachers Association book, Exemplary Science in Grades 9–12.

IMSA History 2002–2009

2002

In 2004, the State of Illinois invests in a new state-of-the-art science complex.

Two of 10 top winners in the 64th Intel Science Talent Search are IMSA students.

IMSA Board of Trustees establishes Alumni Awards program in 2006.
IMSA named to “Public Elites” list in Newsweek’s Best High Schools in the U.S. special report

Bayer Corporation honors IMSA Excellence 2000+ as best practice program for helping girls and underrepresented minorities participate and achieve in STEM

IMSA Board of Trustees Alumni Awards program established to recognize alumni who deliver outstanding contributions to their fields of endeavor, to IMSA, and to the citizens of Illinois, our nation and world

IMSA Fund for Advancement of Education establishes endowment program featuring Stephanie Pace Marshall Endowment to Ignite Innovation; early major gift donors include alumni

New strategic plan charts bold course for IMSA’s third decade; mission: “to ignite and nurture creative, ethical scientific minds that advance the human condition”

Dr. Stephanie Pace Marshall steps down as President, Board names her President Emerita

Board selects second IMSA President, prominent Illinois education leader Dr. Glenn W. “Max” McGee

IMSA and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign establish formal institutional partnership

Residence Hall 1503 renamed Alumni Hall recognizing cumulative alumni donations exceeding $1,000,000

Students and faculty launch IMSA Energy Center, engineering and research projects on alternative energy sources and conservation

IMSA is the first secondary institution in the world to form a chapter for One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) initiative

Supported by a federal grant, Golden Apple Foundation and IMSA join forces to prepare future mathematics and science teachers for Illinois schools

IMSA tapped as lead site for national study by American Psychological Association, funded by National Science Foundation, on impact of specialized public high schools of science, mathematics and technology

IMSA captures the 2009 Intel Schools of Distinction Star Innovator Award, top honor in nation for science excellence

Problem-Based Learning expands to schools in Central and Southern Illinois, Rockford and Chicago thanks to three consecutive Innovation Generation Grants from the Motorola Foundation

Robust, multifaceted platform CoolHub.IMSA created to support and scale collaborative innovation projects and networks

Student Inquiry and Research at IMSA featured in National Science Teachers Association book, Inquiry: The Key to Exemplary Science

IMSA opens Field Offices in Chicago and Metro East to expand programs and services for educators and students in these communities

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2006

2007

2008

2009
In his State of the State Address, Illinois Governor Pat Quinn recognizes “world-renowned” IMSA and its alumni who “certainly have made their mark on our economy and on our world.”

Two IMSA teams received the highest ranking possible in the 12th annual international High School Mathematical Contest in Modeling (HiMCM), placing IMSA among the top eight schools in the world in this prestigious competition.

Abbott Fund awards 2nd major grant to IMSA Fund to support IMSA’s science program, professional development for Illinois teachers, online mathematics and science brainteasers and word problems for Illinois students, and collaborative innovation projects.

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and IMSA’s Problem-Based Learning team partner to develop and facilitate the Illinois Innovation Talent Program which fosters partnerships between industry and Illinois high schools.

IMSA and the High School Affiliated with Renmin University (RDFZ) in China join forces to advance student research in sustainable energy, teacher professional development, intercultural understanding and global collaboration.

Inspired by Dr. Eric McLaren, principal/vice president of academic programs and charter staff member, IMSA embraces the cause of orphan diseases and partners with Project A.L.S.™ to fight “Lou Gehrig’s disease.”

The Harris Family Foundation pledges $1,000,000 to the IMSA Fund’s Stephanie Pace Marshall Endowment to Ignite Innovation.

IMSA begins 25th anniversary year, inviting and challenging all to go “beyond knowledge.”