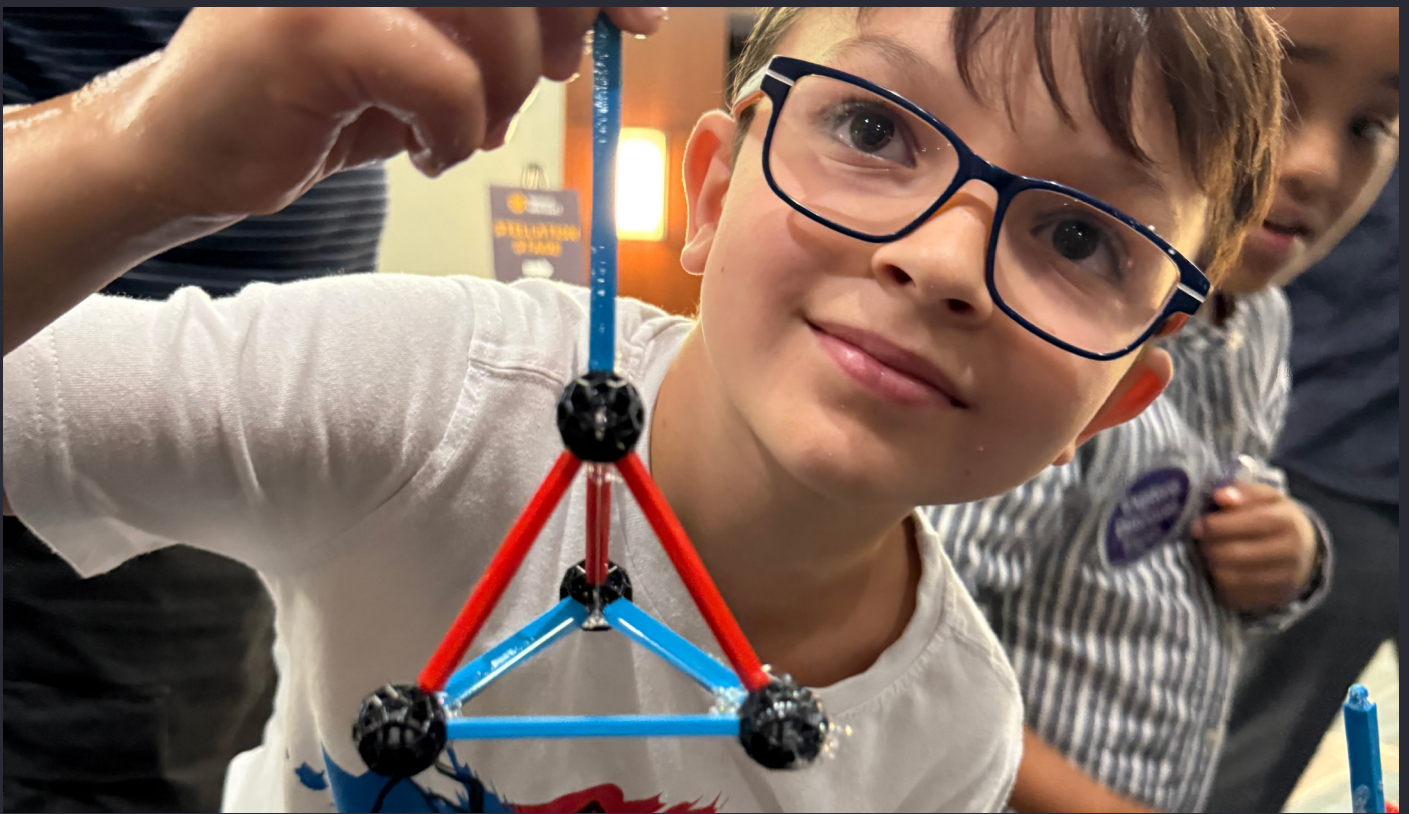


2025

Annual Report



Developing the mathematical
talents of extraordinary students

Message from the CEO



“Our work is an investment in the future, fostering incredible STEM talent beginning with early education”

2025 was a year of tremendous growth for National Math Stars. We went from identifying and supporting Stars in Texas to working with Stars across 7 states. We forged our first state DOE partnership (with Iowa) for true universal screening of top math talent. We accepted 102 new Stars into our existing Voyager Stars program... and launched the pilot of our Pathfinder Stars program with another 258. To support all this, our full-time team expanded from 6 to 16. And we're just getting started!

I'm proud of those accomplishments. But so much of the magic we're creating isn't captured by numbers. It's in the small moments: a Star emerging from a career panel with the determination to become a geometer, a school creating accelerated math pathways for all of their advanced learners because of NMS, a huge grin when a Star solves a Rubik's cube for the first time, or parents telling me they finally see their child being challenged.

I see our growth not as a goal in itself but as an opportunity: to enable those magical moments for more families, and to prepare more amazing young mathematicians to accomplish great things for the United States and the world.

Ilana Walder-Biesanz, CEO & Founder

Mission & Programs

Our Mission

National Math Stars ensures mathematically extraordinary students from all communities have the resources they need to reach the frontiers of math and science.

Math Awards

Top 2% of math students

For the top 2% of 2nd- and 3rd-grade math students, identified by schools, districts or states. Recognition with a medal and an invitation to apply to Stars Programs



Voyager Stars

1-in-1,000 ability · Fully funded · 10 years

For the highest-ability, highest-need students. Fully funded access to advanced coursework, competitions, enrichment, mentorship and community



Pathfinder Stars

1-in-1,000 ability · Need-based financial aid · 10 years

For students with the same extraordinary ability but less need. Lighter investment with lasting impact through community, curated opportunities, and sliding-scale financial aid



Who We Are

Our History

National Math Stars (NMS) began as a project incubated by Carina Initiatives in summer 2023, with the goal of helping more kids from more communities reach the highest levels of STEM achievement. Starting with 12 Pilot Stars around the country in Fall 2023, our founding leaders worked to develop and refine a 10-year program of wraparound support for mathematically extraordinary students and their families.

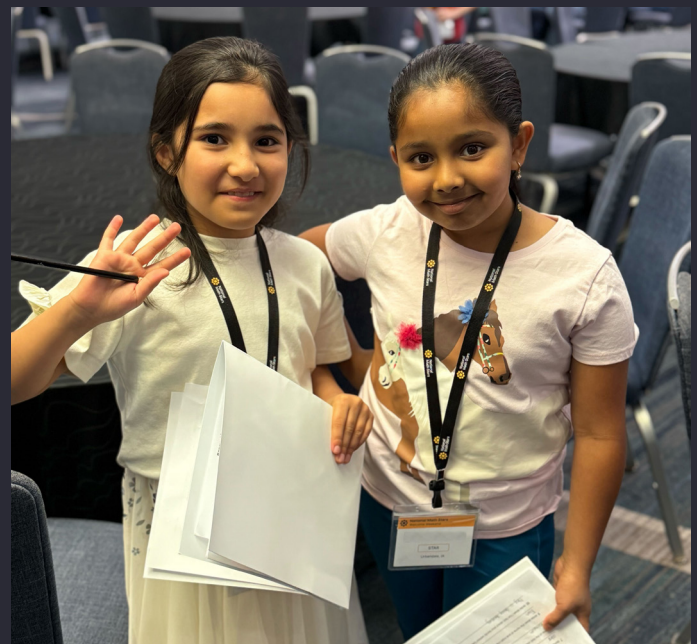
In May 2024, NMS spun out of Carina Initiatives and announced \$16.5M in initial funding commitments. Texas was chosen as the inaugural region for Star recruitment. Our Partnerships team launched our Awards Program to great success; Texas schools nominated 1,700 of their top math students. After a careful selection process, we invited 61 Stars to form our first Voyager cohort.

In 2025, we expanded beyond Texas to Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa (which became our first state partner). We also expanded our programming, adding Pathfinder Stars to reach even more mathematically talented students. We received nearly 6,400 applications and selected 102 Voyager Stars and 258 Pathfinder Stars.



Our Values

- Choose impact over ego
- Share openly, listen actively
- Keep learning
- Focus on what matters
- Persevere



Math Awards Program

Our Math Awards Program enables schools and districts to recognize and celebrate exceptional mathematical talent. We provide free award packets for the top 2% of 2nd- and 3rd-grade students. This early recognition helps students begin to see themselves as mathematicians.

Each award includes a gold medal, an official nomination letter and an invitation for families to apply to our Stars Programs. Schools and districts also receive resources to host award ceremonies, helping to build a culture that celebrates mathematical excellence. In 2025, National Math Stars partnered with schools and districts across seven states to present awards to 12,126 students.



Iowa Department of Education announces state partnership with National Math Stars

In 2025, Iowa became the first state in the nation to nominate all eligible 3rd graders for Math Awards. 764 students from 295 public and private elementary schools across the state received awards. [Read more here.](#)



"We are proud to be the first state in the nation to provide mathematically extraordinary students the opportunity to receive these transformational supports."

Iowa Department of Education Director McKenzie Snow

Math Awards – 2025 by the Numbers

12,126

Award letters distributed

608

Districts participated

6

Number of new states added in 2025: Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa

46%

Share of awardees who applied to Stars Programs

7x

Growth since 2024



Celebrating Math Excellence

Our partners have found creative and meaningful ways to honor their Math Awards recipients. From dedicated assemblies and awards nights to special presentations at school board meetings, these celebrations do more than recognize individual achievement: they send a message to the entire school community that mathematical talent is worth celebrating.

Voyager Stars

Voyager is a ten-year, fully funded program that invests more than \$100,000 per student to support mathematically talented young people from as early as second grade through the end of high school. Designed for families with significant unmet need, Voyager pairs financial support with personalized guidance to create a clear pathway to the frontiers of mathematics, science and technology.

Every Star's journey is unique. Working in close partnership with students and their families, Voyager builds customized plans around each child's strengths and interests across four core pillars: Math Development, Financial Support, Family Advising and Supportive Community. Together, these pillars ensure that Stars have the resources, relationships and opportunities they need to thrive, not just academically, but as confident, connected members of a lasting community.



93%

Average weekly attendance in advanced math courses

88%

Average weekly attendance in Math Mentoring sessions

211

STEM courses taken by Voyager Stars in 2025

1.6 years

Stars' median growth on NWEA MAP test

90%

of Stars say they are 'excited about math'

Voyager Stars – Program Pillars



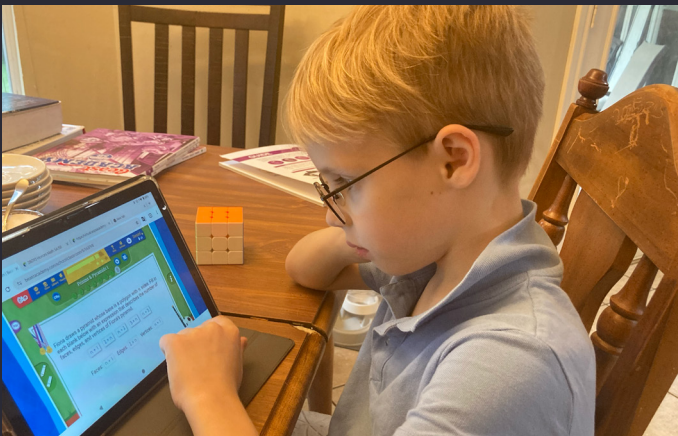
Math Development

Each Voyager Star takes at least one advanced math course per semester, participates in weekly mentoring sessions focused on deep problem solving and attends annual STEM summer camps.



Family Advising

Each family is paired with a dedicated advisor for the full ten-year journey, supporting them with personalized pathway planning, school navigation and career exploration.



Financial Support

Families receive an annual budget for STEM enrichment activities of their choosing, along with a Technology Welcome Pack at program entry to ensure Stars have everything they need to participate from day one.



Community

Voyager fosters a sense of belonging through a cohort-based model, with regular virtual and in-person events, interest-driven clubs and dedicated forums that keep Stars and families connected throughout the program.

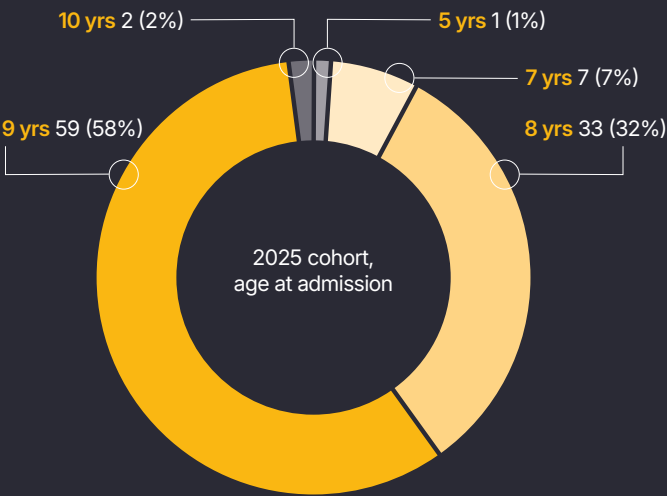
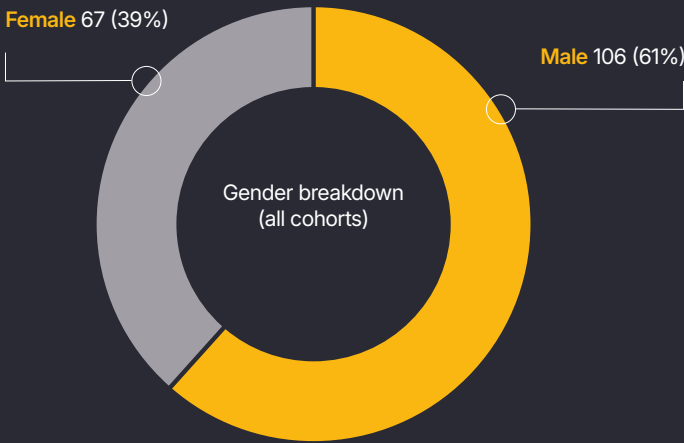
Meet Our Voyager Stars

173

Total Voyager Stars

10 Pilot Cohort
61 2024 Cohort
102 2025 Cohort

Number of Voyager Stars (all cohorts) by state:



	Texas	118
	Iowa	17
	Illinois	11
	Ohio	8
	Wisconsin	6
	Michigan	3
	Indiana	1
	Other	9

More about our Voyager Stars:

- These Stars represent **93 districts** and **143 unique schools**
- Median household income is **\$62,500**
- **28%** qualify for free or reduced lunch
- **46%** are from first-generation immigrant families



Voyager Star Stories



Albertini

Voyager 2025
Minnesota, age 8

Taking Pre-Algebra as a 4th grader; plans to become an engineer

"Math is beautiful when you can crack your brain to solve it."

Zhoie

Voyager 2024
Texas, age 10

Zhoie designed and printed out a custom plant tray to prevent pots from tipping over

"Math is very important in life and is needed by everyone, and math can be used in ways that people don't know."



Liam

Voyager 2025
Texas, age 9

Taking 5th-grade math as a 3rd grader by working on Beast Academy during school thanks to NMS advocacy support

"[Math is] awesome and beautiful in many ways, such as the Mandelbrot set."



Pathfinder Stars

National Math Stars launched a new program called Pathfinder in the fall of 2025. Open to the country's most gifted young mathematicians regardless of family need, Pathfinder connects Stars and their families with the expertise, community and support they need to thrive.

Pathfinder provides families with guidance across the advanced math and STEM enrichment landscape (including courses, camps and competitions). Pathfinder also brings those families together through events and community, so Stars can thrive alongside peers who share their passion. And where cost would otherwise be a barrier, need-based, sliding-scale financial aid ensures it isn't.

In its pilot year, Pathfinder is building the foundation for what promises to be an exceptional long-term community. We expect the program to evolve as we learn from our fearless pilot families, who are using what we've built to chart their paths toward the frontiers of STEM.



Early highlights from the first 3 months of Pathfinder:

65%

of Stars are working on advanced math

34%

of Stars tried new science, technology, or math enrichment activities

\$95,000

financial aid awarded

68%

of families feel confident helping their Star navigate advanced math

We can't wait to see Pathfinder's impact grow as the pilot year progresses

Pathfinder Stars – Program Pillars



Math Journey Planning & Support

We connect each Star to advanced math courses that keep them challenged and engaged, working with families to continuously refine their learning plans. Tutoring support is available to help Stars progress through difficulties.



STEM Opportunity Advising

We guide parents in supporting their Star's STEM journeys. We recommend extracurricular providers, summer camps and competitions, and coordinate NMS-exclusive classes and contest sessions.



Targeted Financial Aid

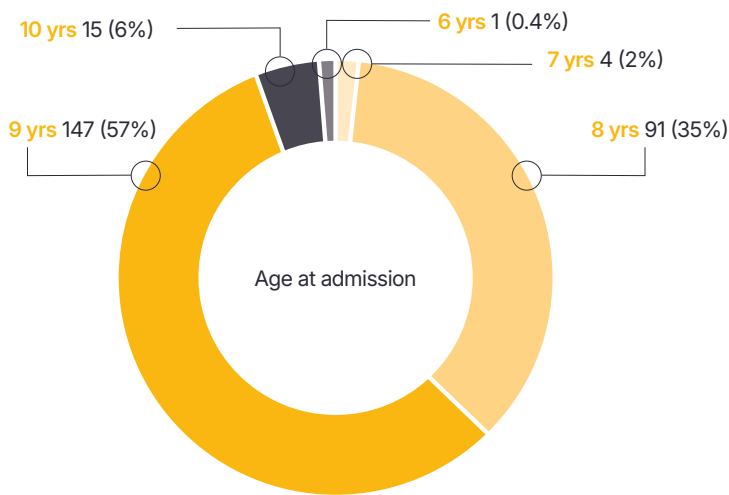
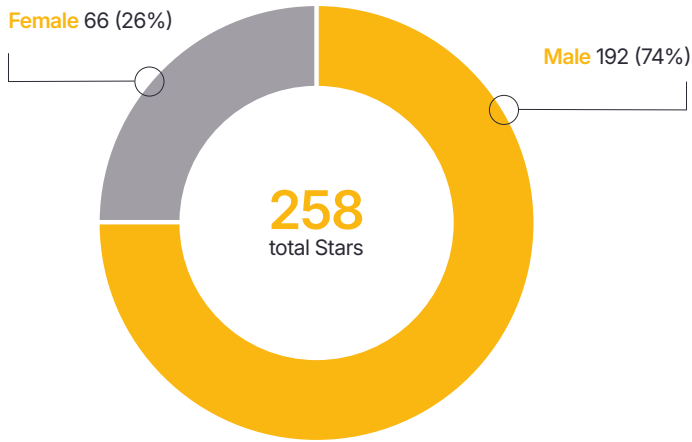
We offer sliding-scale, need-based financial aid to help offset the cost of advanced math courses. All families also benefit from NMS' discounted rates with select STEM providers.



Supportive Community

Families join a vibrant mathematical community built around shared passion. Online parent forums serve as a hub for questions and conversation, while virtual and in-person events offer fun bonding through math jams, puzzles sessions and field trips.

Meet Our Pathfinder Stars

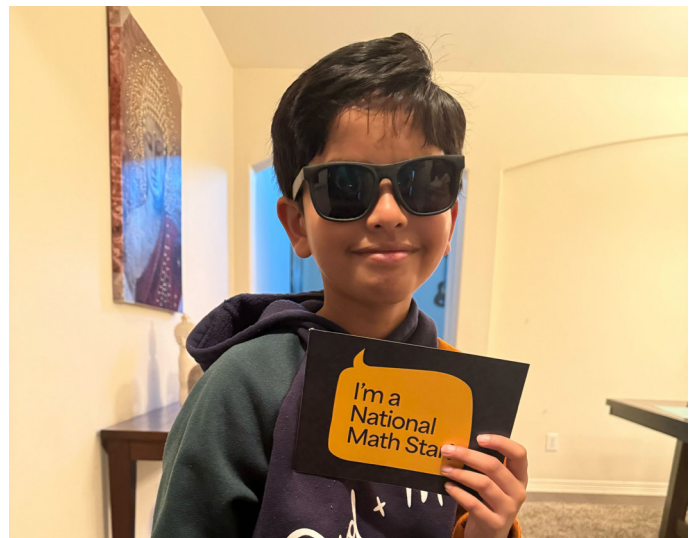


Number of Pathfinder Stars by state:

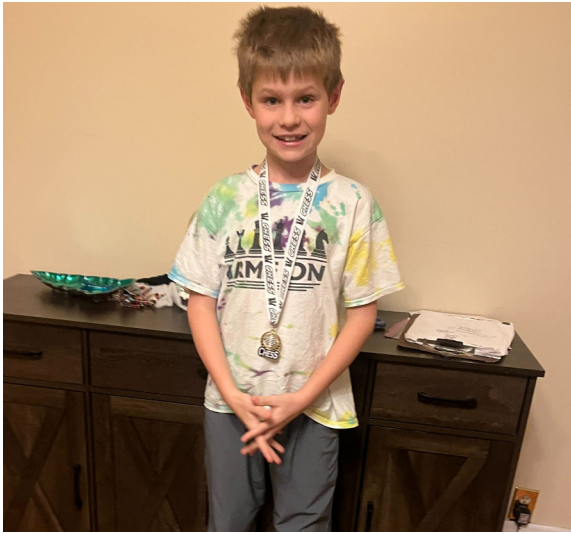
● Texas	188
● Illinois	22
● Iowa	20
● Michigan	11
● Ohio	7
● Indiana	4
● Wisconsin	2
● Other	4

More about our Pathfinder Stars:

- **21.7%** of Stars receive financial aid
- **199** unique schools
- **105** different cities



Pathfinder Star Stories



Jack

Pathfinder 2025
Ohio, age 9

Currently a third grader studying Algebra 1, Jack will move to a gifted school next year after being supported by NMS in finding the right fit

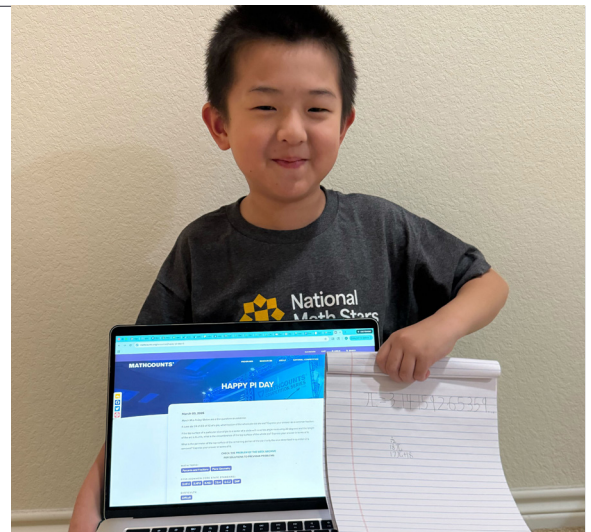
"[Math is] a splendid subject."

George

Pathfinder 2025
Texas, age 9

A fourth grader taking a self-paced Pre-Algebra class, George also competes in chess, robotics, and math, earning multiple podium finishes

"[Math is] thought-provoking, shapes how you think, and [solves] real-life problems."



Aakanksha

Pathfinder 2025
Michigan, age 9

In third grade, Aakanksha is exploring electric and magnetic phenomena through an experimental physics course with a Princeton Senior Lecturer

"[Math is] my favorite subject because it's complicated enough to challenge me."



2025 Achievements & Celebrations

Math & STEM contests

- On the AMC 8, Solomon (Pilot) and David (Pilot) both made the Honor Roll, placing them in the top 5% nationally
- Trisha ('24), Eva ('24) and Ava ('24) all scored in the 90th percentile on Math Kangaroo, and Idris (Pilot) won third place among Wisconsin 4th graders
- On the Noetic Learning Math Contest, Yesukhei ('25) earned a perfect score, and Churchill ('24), Damian ('25), Michael ('25) and Trisha ('24) all placed in the top 10% nationally, earning a National Honor Roll designation
- An NMS Girls' Adventures in Mathematics (GAIM) team — Trisha ('24), Amira ('24), Adaline ('24), and Evani ('24) — placed 1st in the South Region and 10th in the nation
- Xavier (Pilot) qualified for the Texas state UIL Number Sense competition

Major projects

- Solomon (Pilot) collaborated with a research group from Math in the Mountains to develop an AI capable of solving elite math problems
- David (Pilot) invented his own language
- Skylar ('24) & Finley ('24) launched small businesses
- As 6th graders, David (Pilot) sat his first AP exam (physics) and Solomon (Pilot) was recognized as an AP Scholar with Honor for his 10 AP exam results



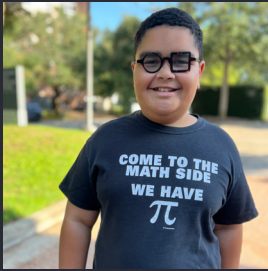
Stars attending selected 2025 Summer Camps:

- Epsilon Camp (4)
- Math In the Mountains (4)
- Campersand (11)
- Camp Lemma (6)
- UCLA Math Circle (1)
- Johns Hopkins CTY (2)
- Northwestern CTD (2)

NMS Founder Receives National Award

In December 2025, National Math Stars founder and CEO Ilana Walder-Biesanz was named one of five recipients of the **Bezos Courage & Civility Award**, recognizing her work supporting mathematically talented students. The award comes with a **\$5M grant towards National Math Stars**, which we will use to accelerate our growth and build the infrastructure needed to scale operations across the United States.

NMS in the News



The 74

Program That Gives \$100K to Support Young Gifted Math Students Poised to Expand

[Read here](#)



The Texas Association of Gifted and Talented Podcast

Empowering Math Stars: A Conversation with Ilana Walder-Biesanz and Alex Lochoff

[Read here](#)



Forbes

How National Math Stars Removes Barriers For Young Math Talent

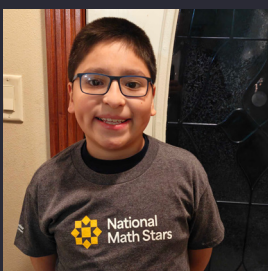
[Read here](#)



Houston Chronicle

Students' math skills have fallen. This nonprofit hopes to create the next generation of inventors

[Read here](#)



Iowa Department of Education

National Math Stars adds 21 Iowa students to new Pathfinder Stars program

[Read here](#)



Northern Public Radio

'National Math Stars' wants to identify and support Illinois' youngest math minds

[Read here](#)

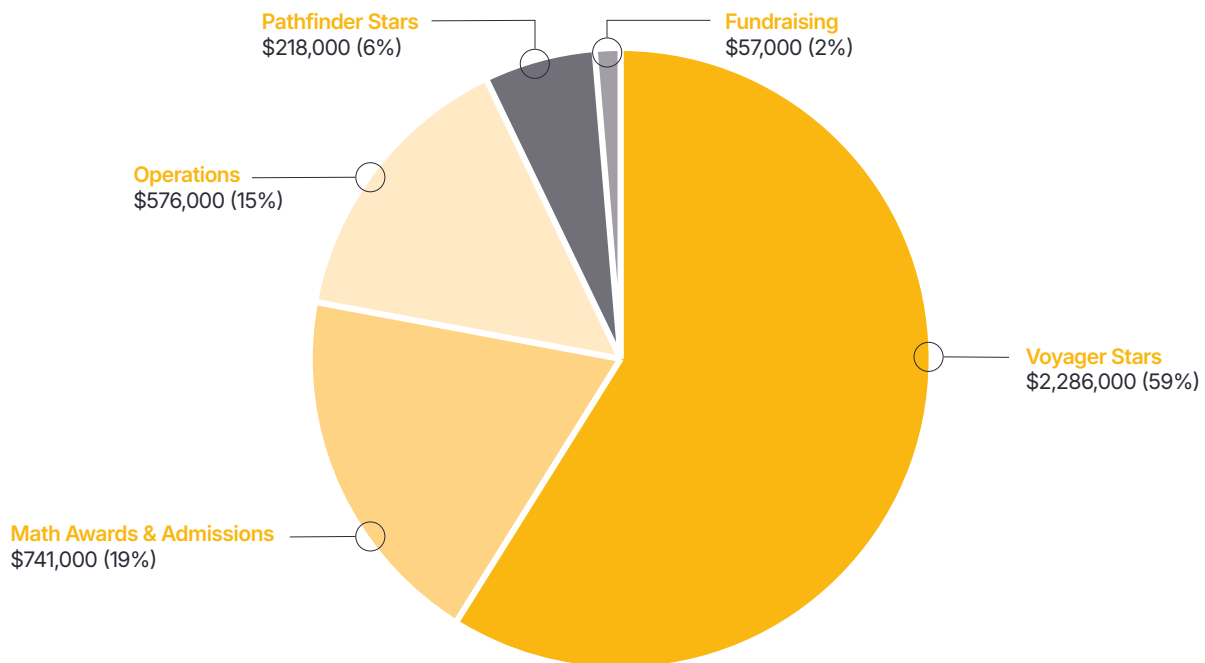
Financial Overview

\$14.5M

in revenue

\$3.9M

in expenses



Thank You to Our Funders

Carina
Initiatives

Polynera
Fund

Jeff Bezos and
Lauren Sánchez Bezos

Astera
Institute

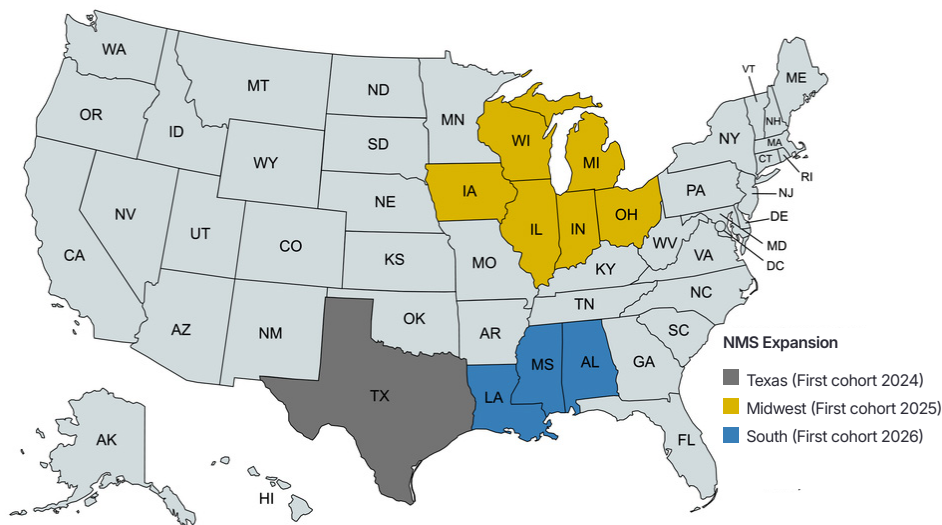
David
Vincent

Mar Family
Fund

Overdeck Family
Foundation

Ravi
Vakil

Looking Ahead



2025 reach

80M

24% of US population

After 2026 expansion

92M

28% of US population

Highlights

Expansion into new states

Beginning in summer 2026, National Math Stars will admit students in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana, as well as our seven current states

Additional state partnerships

Both Indiana and Alabama have agreed to state-wide partnerships with National Math Stars in 2026; Iowa will also partner with us again in 2026

Larger incoming classes of Voyager & Pathfinder Stars

Our 2026 cohorts will consist of approximately 125 Voyager Stars and 400 Pathfinder Stars, bringing our total anticipated Stars Programs population to 800+

Math seminars for advanced Voyager Stars

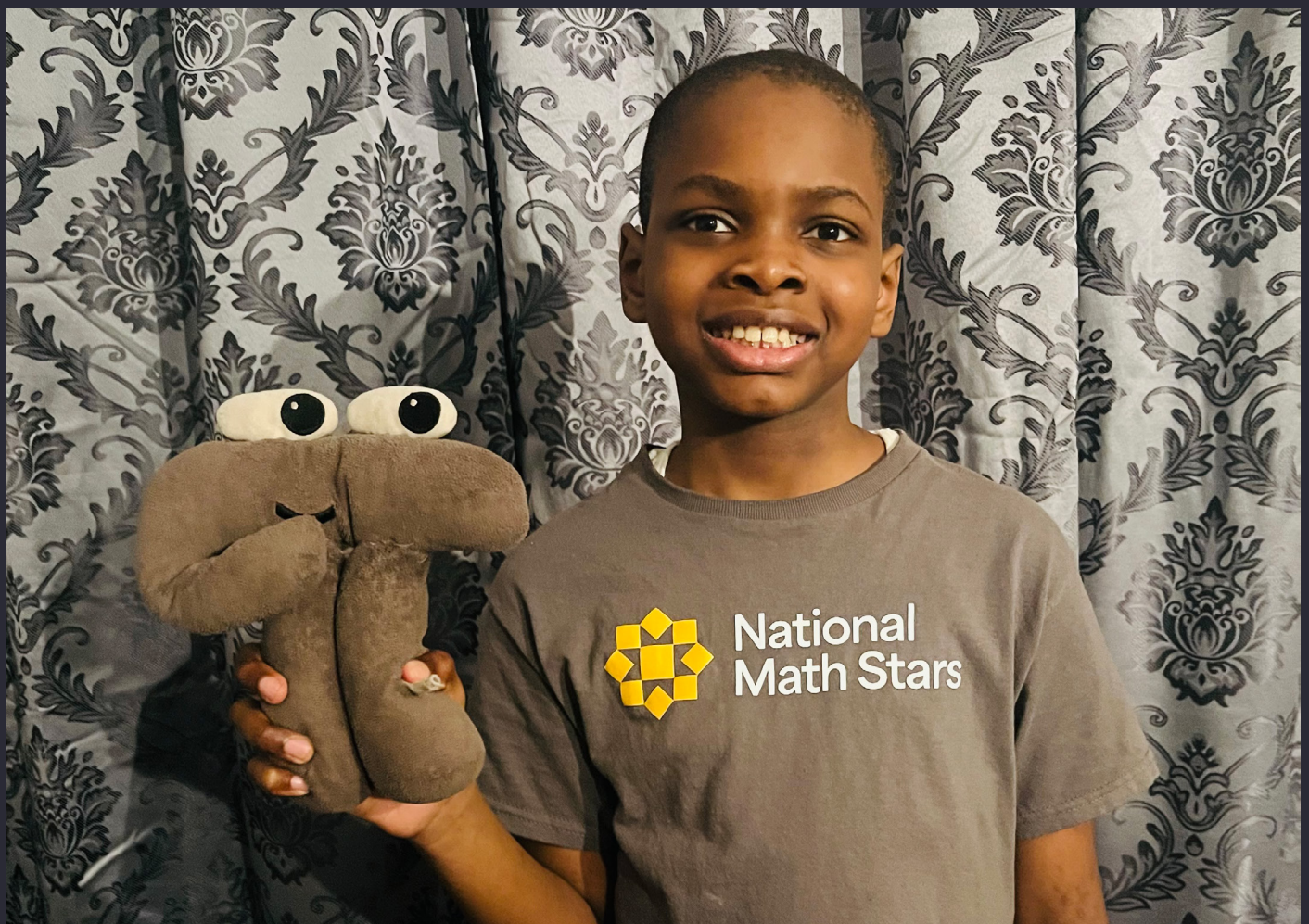
Our most advanced Voyager Stars will transition from math mentoring into Math Seminars covering topics like Game Theory, Graph Theory and Chord Explorations

All of our programs will expand and evolve in many ways over the course of 2026. We can't wait to share more with you as we learn, grow and improve!

A final word from David, Pilot Star, 11 yo

When asked to complete the sentence "Math is...," David wrote:

Sorry, but there is absolutely no way that I - not you or anyone else - can complete that sentence and bring into full scope the incredulous-making wonders of the mathematical world, a world where anything, anything, is possible, if only you set your mind to it, if only you work at it, day by day, until you reach the ultimate climax, the joy you feel when you finally, finally, create that thing in math that you've been working on for days, weeks, months, maybe even years... that joy can only be expressed, that joy can only be understood, that joy can only be felt, that joy can only come to life when it becomes a real thing in the world of mathematics, that you can finally, finally, express that your work is done... hour by hour, day by day, week by week, month by month, finally, finally, math at its fullest; the exhaustion, the joy, the surprise, the self-doubt that you feel when you can't solve a problem and think, "I'm not good enough, I'm not smart enough," where the only thing that you can do when you feel that self-doubt like an arrow in your heel; you think "yet", you think "yet", you think "yet"... the problem may even seem impossible, but finally, it is solved, not by you, not by your friends, not by anyone you know, but by a masked hero, one that dares, like you, to dare the deep, and finally, finally, finally, yet becomes now; the reality of now is in your face, like a surprise party, and there is nothing you can do but feel joy.



For questions about National Math Stars:
info@nationalmathstars.org

