

Mission Innovation Spring 2026 Challenge Award Winners

The Mission Innovation Challenge invites K-12 students to think like real-world innovators as they take on space exploration challenges through STEM, creativity, and problem-solving. For the Spring 2026 mission, students stepped into the role of engineers, scientists, and aerospace problem-solvers to design conceptual carbon capture systems that could support clean, breathable air during long-duration space missions.

Student teams researched the challenge of managing carbon dioxide in resource-limited space, lunar, or Martian habitats; imagined bold solutions; and communicated their ideas through creative pitch presentations. Their concepts also highlighted how space-focused innovation can inspire ideas with potential applications here on Earth.

Congratulations to all Mission Innovation Challenge participants and to this year's award winners.

Award Winners

Top Innovation: Elementary Individual

The Carbon Crushers - Maxine Phelan Elementary School

Top Innovation: Elementary Team

Titanic Swim Team: The Moss Wall - Eastlake High School

Top Innovation: Middle School Individual

Thompson Thunders: AERO-LITE - Thompson Middle School

Top Innovation: Middle School Team

Space Chasers: R.E.C.A.P. - Melillo Middle School

Top Innovation: High School Individual

AeroCycle - Robinson Elementary School

Top Innovation: High School Team

JP - 7: The Toaster - Episcopal High School

Honorable Mention

Magna MOF - River Oaks Elementary

The J.T.D.S NASA Star Carbon Capture Project! - L.F. Smith Elementary

HELIOWEAVE - Young Women's College Preparatory Academy

Dulles Aerospace: ATCSS - Dulles High School

Thank You

Space Center Houston extends its sincere thanks to the students, educators, families, and supporters who made the Mission Innovation Challenge possible. Your participation helps inspire the next generation of STEM innovators and problem-solvers.