

Research

\$800K Study To Test Efficacy of Digital Learning Tool

- By [Michael Hart](#)
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The [National Science Foundation](#) (NSF) will give [North Carolina State University](#) a grant of nearly \$800,000 to study how a digital learning program can best benefit students.

Specifically, the NSF's [Promoting Research and Innovation in Methodologies for Evaluation](#) (PRIME) program will give North Carolina State \$799,837 over the next three years to study the effectiveness of [Mind Research Institute's ST Math](#) software. The ST Math software uses computer-based games to help students understand math concepts, typically in a blended environment that includes interfacing with a teacher.

The principal investigator in the study, Assistant Professor Teomara Rutherford, said she and her team will collect and analyze data from 41,200 third- and fourth-graders in five school districts across the country that have large numbers of students who have not had very much exposure to science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). The goal is to explore how student behavior, student problem-solving methods and teacher actions influence learning outcomes and student motivation.

"There are woefully few STEM programs available to schools that meet the federal standards for evidence, meaning they can prove that they actually work," Rutherford said. "Our larger goal with this study is to create better methods to analyze digital learning programs in ways that benefit students and teachers."

For example, the study will look at how replaying easy puzzles instead of moving on to more difficult ones or responding to a particularly tricky problem influences learning outcomes and motivation. It will also look at the impact teachers have when they incorporate games into their classroom lessons.

About the Author

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