Jackson State University (JSU), Hinds Community College and Jackson Public School District (JPS) have partnered through the CESTEME initiative to, among other objectives, enhance the academic infrastructure of STEM-related programs at their respective institutions. CESTEME is the Center of Excellence in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Education at JSU and is funded by the U. S. Department of Defense.

In March, 2015, several JPS CESTEME teachers attended the 2015 National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) Conference in Chicago, IL. Among the many scheduled instructional activities of the conference was a presentation by the JPS teachers which focused on Next Generation Science Standards’ (NGSS) issues and challenges. Their topic of discussion was “Problems and Solutions Facing Teachers with the Next Generation Science Standards”. They elaborated on the issues of funding, creating defined teaching frameworks, and regional/cultural shifts as well as best practices all in an effort to garner support for nationwide adoption of the new standards.

In recognition of their scholarly merit and the winner of their NSTA presentation, on April 7, 2015, Dr. Cedrick Gray, Superintendent of Jackson Public School District awarded the CESTEME teachers with the Golden Bow Tie Award of Excellence. Among those recognized was Mr. Christen Robinson, a 2014 Masters graduate of JSU Department of Chemistry. Mr. Robinson is currently teaching at Wingfield High School.