The Illinois MRSEC implemented its middle school outreach program “Musical Magnetism” for the third year starting in Feb. 2021, in a six-week, virtual format. The program engages middle school students in materials science demos as they practice creative expression with a science theme. The program reached 50 7th and 8th graders at Franklin STEAM Academy, a school with majority URM students.

Kits distributed to students provided content for hands-on materials science activities. MRSEC Faculty, postdocs, and students led lessons and assisted throughout the program. One of the highlight activities, letting students deconstruct a toy to learn for themselves how it works, was still included. A virtual visit to Materials Research Lab and instrument demo inspired students to write haikus. The virtual format allowed participation of scientist/artist visitors from Chicago and Boston, including a professional tap dancer/materials scientist and a chemist/glass artist. The students produced creative pieces with science themes, including drawings, comics, spoken word story, and poetry.