



2026 Externship Descriptions and Quotes by Industry Sector

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Engineering and Manufacturing Descriptions

	Workplace Host	Teacher Extern	Description of Project	Extern Quote
EM	Accumold, Ankeny	Ryan Austin, Ankeny Centennial High School	Ryan Austin worked with Accumold during the summer of 2026, contributing to the company’s employee training and professional development efforts. Drawing on his background in education and management, he collaborated with management and human resources to evaluate and improve existing training programs. Ryan provided an outside perspective on employee relations and instructional practices, helping identify opportunities for enhancement. His experience demonstrated how educational expertise could strengthen workplace training while supporting employee growth and organizational effectiveness.	<i>I want the method to become the message in my classes. What I mean by this is I want them to learn how to work through the work. This process helps students develop skills applicable to any setting, at school and beyond.</i>
EM	Accumold, Ankeny	Anna Christian, Urbandale CSD	During her externship at Accumold, Anna developed a training program for Apprentice Mold Cleaners to support the company's expanding workforce needs. She learned about the company's apprenticeship pathways and collaborated with staff from human resources, engineering, and toolmaking to better understand manufacturing careers. Throughout the experience, Anna gained valuable insight into workforce development, technical training, and the skills required for success in advanced manufacturing. She also discovered practical classroom connections, including the importance of trigonometry, teamwork, communication, and problem-solving in industry.	<i>My biggest take away from that was that students need to learn productive struggle and it's important to encourage them to use what they already know to solve problems.</i>
EM	Collins Aerospace, Cedar Rapids	Alex Bendlage, CR Jefferson	Alex worked with the Tactical Communications Team at Collins Aerospace, supporting systems and testing engineers working on radios and related communication equipment. He assisted with environmental testing, reorganized test documentation to improve efficiency, and created reusable presentation templates. Alex also observed long-term engineering planning sessions to better understand project coordination and workflows. In addition, he participated in the disassembly and reconfiguration of radio components. The experience strengthened his technical, organizational, and engineering support skills within a professional aerospace environment.	<i>I have realized the importance in every step in a process and that pride or ownership in your work goes a long way.</i>

	Workplace Host	Teacher Extern	Description of Project	Extern Quote
EM	Geater Machining and Manufacturing, Independence	Luke Kirby, East Buchanan CSD	Luke worked as a CNC operator in the machining department at Geater Manufacturing, where he gained hands-on experience using advanced CNC milling equipment. He manufactured precision components for leading companies, including Collins Aerospace and Starlink, while learning modern machining processes and workplace expectations. The externship strengthened his technical skills and expanded his understanding of advanced manufacturing careers. Luke gained valuable industry experience that will help him introduce students to career opportunities available within their local manufacturing community.	<i>It is very cool to take 100% stock tool steel and machine it and work it into a valuable tool that will help someone do their job more efficiently for years to come.</i>
EM	Interstates, Sioux Center	Lydia Kerekcs, Orange City Christian	Lydia completed her externship with the technical training team at Interstates, where she reviewed employee training materials and recommended updates to improve learning resources. She also explored the company's culture and core values of dependability, integrity, trust, quality, and family while participating in technical training and electrical system labs. The experience expanded her understanding of workforce development, technical education, and electrical systems while demonstrating the importance of strong organizational culture and effective employee training.	<i>It is amazing to see the wide range of projects that take place at Interstates and hear of how it gets put together into the final projects.</i>
EM	LeClaire Manufacturing, Bettendorf	Brandon Tolle, Bettendorf CSD	Brandon completed his externship at LeClaire Manufacturing, where he developed a digital database of metal casting defects by converting paper records into an electronic system. He also created six-view image grids of commonly reworked parts to support the development of an AI-based inspection system designed to distinguish acceptable parts from defective ones. In addition, Brandon designed a 3D model, created a mold, completed the metal casting process, and produced a finished pattern to use as a classroom teaching tool. The experience strengthened his skills in manufacturing, automation, and engineering design.	<i>I am amazed the vast number of products that they make and how robots make the process so much more efficient and safer.</i>
EM	LMT Defense, Eldridge	Brayden Zaruba, Muscatine CSD	During his externship with LMT Defense, Brayden worked alongside the engineering process team to design, machine, and test manufacturing fixtures that supported production operations. He also collaborated with engineers to analyze and document the company's engineering design process, studying each stage from identifying production challenges to implementing optimized manufacturing solutions. Drawing on previous teaching and industry experiences, Brayden gained a deeper understanding of engineering workflows, problem-solving, and process improvement. The experience strengthened his ability to connect real-world engineering practices with classroom instruction.	<i>Knowing something that I designed from scratch, modeled, prototyped and made into a production fixture worked so well they asked for another.</i>
EM	M3 Fabrications, Bloomfield	Andrea Cottey, Davis County High School	Andrea completed her externship at M3 Fabrication, where she worked in the forming, machining, and powder coating departments while gaining experience in multiple manufacturing processes. She operated a brake press to form metal parts, assisted with machining components for automated milking systems, and supported powder coating operations by preparing, finishing, and packaging parts for shipment. Andrea also learned the order quoting process and helped advance customer orders through the review system. Her primary project involved digitizing safety data sheets and auditing the facility's inventory, strengthening workplace safety documentation and organization.	<i>There is constant communication and collaboration between departments throughout the production process. When an issue rises, employees must work together to sort it out and come up with a plan to prevent it from happening.</i>
EM	Mechanico, Fort Dodge	Jeremiah Reed, Fort Dodge High School	Jeremiah completed his externship with Mechanico, performing industrial maintenance during scheduled shutdowns at manufacturing facilities in Iowa and Wyoming. He replaced bearings, housings, sprockets, and conveyor components while adjusting chains and belt systems to ensure reliable plant operations. The work required precision measurement, strict adherence to safety procedures, and proficiency with a wide range of tools. Jeremiah strengthened his technical, problem-solving, and teamwork skills while gaining valuable experience in industrial maintenance and equipment reliability.	<i>The most impactful part was building a relationship with Mechanico and setting up a good partnership that can grow in the future. I'm excited to continue to grow that relationship and see where it goes!</i>
EM	Moveero, Armstrong	Allison Walders, North Union CSD	Allison completed her externship with Moveero, where she updated Standard Work Instructions for a six-stage washing system in the hub and spindle manufacturing area. She organized and cataloged supplies to improve workflow and collaborated with production staff to identify opportunities for process improvements. Allison documented updated procedures that supported greater efficiency and consistency throughout the manufacturing process. The experience strengthened her understanding of industrial operations, continuous improvement, process documentation, and teamwork in an advanced manufacturing environment.	<i>So many moving parts and processes to observe. I love seeing how the process is somewhat the same, but the finished product can be completely different.</i>

	Workplace Host	Teacher Extern	Description of Project	Extern Quote
EM	RCS Millwork, Ankeny	Scott Schiefelbein, Winterset CSD	Scott completed his externship with RCS Millwork, where he worked with high school students participating in the RCS Academy. He helped students develop workplace skills while emphasizing safety, professionalism, and teamwork through hands-on training and classroom instruction. Using the Architectural Woodwork Institute curriculum, Scott supported students as they learned millwork techniques alongside experienced professionals. The experience strengthened his understanding of workforce development and apprenticeship programs while preparing students for long-term careers in the woodworking and manufacturing industries.	<i>It really helps to have real world experience and work with the pros! Some things I cannot apply because of an equipment barrier, but I can still work around that and use similar techniques.</i>
EM	RCS Millwork, Ankeny	Avery Wolfkill, Waukee CSD	Avery worked as part of the drafting team at RCS Millwork, where she created detailed shop drawings for custom architectural millwork. Using AutoCAD and Microvellum software, she helped transform architectural plans and specifications into precise fabrication documents used in production. Avery collaborated with team members to verify material specifications, hardware selections, and project requirements, ensuring each work order met design standards and customer expectations. The externship strengthened her skills in technical drafting, attention to detail, design software, and collaboration while providing valuable insight into the manufacturing and construction industries.	<i>My students were more interested in my externship experience than I expected! It honestly felt like I had engineering “street cred” with my students.</i>
EM	Rosenboom, Sheldon	Kimberly Poeckes, South O’Brien CSD	During her externship with Rosenboom in Sheldon, Kim worked with the Continuous Improvement Team to develop a Layered Process Audit system for plant operations. She created presentations, infographics, online data collection forms, and analytical spreadsheets while training operators and team members to use new technology. Her work established a scalable audit process that could be implemented at multiple company locations. The experience strengthened Kim's skills in continuous improvement, data analysis, instructional technology, and workforce training while supporting operational excellence.	<i>My biggest takeaway is how quickly the business world has grabbed onto using AI, but how much learning there is to implementing it effectively.</i>
EM	Sears Seating, Davenport	Brian Price, Davenport CSD	Brian completed his externship with the Manufacturing Engineering Team at Sears Seating, where he conducted production line time studies to verify and establish labor standards for assembly operations. Building on previous experience, he improved data collection methods and prepared reports that met the needs of both company management and union representatives. Brian also learned about manufacturing efficiency and quality improvement initiatives. The experience strengthened his understanding of industrial engineering, workplace collaboration, and process improvement while providing valuable examples to share with his business education students.	<i>Sometimes you will be asked to do things that may not make sense right away, but when the owner or higher ups in your workplace ask for something, you do it.</i>
EM	Wellman Dynamics, Creston	Mahayla Hill, Creston High School	Mahayla completed her externship with the engineering team at Wellman Dynamics, where she focused on systems coding and technical documentation. She developed code for the company's online ARD program, updated training guides, and activated ARD help pages to improve user support. Throughout the experience, Mahayla collaborated with team members while applying HTML coding skills and technology solutions to real-world engineering projects. The externship strengthened her programming, communication, and problem-solving skills in a professional engineering environment.	<i>I have learned to focus on what is feasible while still contributing meaningful improvements. This experience has also required a great deal of self-motivation.</i>
EM	Wetherell Manufacturing, Cleghorn	Matt Hanson, MMCRU CSD	During his externship with Wetherell Manufacturing, Matt gained experience in CNC machining while also learning about business operations and company management. He worked in both the machining department and front office, contributing to projects focused on improving manufacturing processes and reducing the company's environmental impact. The experience provided valuable insight into advanced manufacturing, operational decision-making, and sustainability initiatives. Matt returned to the classroom with practical examples and new ideas to strengthen authentic learning opportunities for his students.	<i>It's really given me a lot to think about in class as far as finding a way to expose students to the principal that ‘how you do your job, effects those around you’.”</i>

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EM	Wetherell Manufacturing, Cleghorn	Nick Long, MMCRU CSD	During his externship at Wetherell Manufacturing, Nick gained experience in the CNC machining department, sawing department, and front office while learning about the production of hydraulic cylinders. He also helped prepare new products for customers and researched a solvent recovery system designed to reduce chemical waste in the painting department. His work supported the company's sustainability efforts while expanding his understanding of manufacturing operations, product development, and environmental responsibility. The experience provided valuable industry knowledge to bring back to the classroom.	<i>A few things I have notice that are harder to teach in class is attention to detail and understanding how the part you are making fits in to the product as a whole.</i>

Technology and Mathematical Modeling Descriptions

	Workplace Host	Teacher Extern	Description of Project	Extern Quote
TM	Art's Way Manufacturing, Armstrong	Lydia Fothergill, North Union CSD	Lydia worked as an accounting specialist with the accounting team at Arts-Way Manufacturing. She documented accounting procedures to create clear, consistent process guides that improved efficiency and helped employees complete tasks accurately. Lydia also collaborated with team members to identify opportunities for improving accounting practices through technology and Lean Work principles. The experience strengthened her understanding of business operations, process improvement, and workplace collaboration while demonstrating how standardized procedures and continuous improvement contribute to organizational success.	<i>Many of the students know you can work at this company, but I don't think they realize all of the different jobs available. Before I started working here, I didn't realize all of the different departments that comprise the company."</i>
TM	Barilla America, Ames	Tony McCutchen, Winterset CSD	Tony developed automated production support tools that replaced manual decision-making with standardized, rule-based procedures. He created an Excel-based system that guided operators through production line shutdowns by automatically generating waste instructions and visual process maps. His work improved consistency, reduced the potential for operator error, simplified employee training, and increased operational efficiency. The experience strengthened Tony's skills in automation, data management, process improvement, and technical problem-solving while supporting more efficient manufacturing operations.	<i>Every professional I have worked with possesses strong content knowledge, but what really sets them apart is their ability to collaborate, communicate, think critically, and adapt when things don't go as planned.</i>
TM	Bio:: Neos, Coralville	Matt Cain, West Branch CSD	Matt contributed to several projects during his externship, with his primary focus on supporting three Workplace Learning Connection high school interns. He mentored the students as they developed a network of IoT devices and created a custom web application to report device data. Matt also reviewed onboarding and training materials, provided recommendations for improvement, and supported internal software development projects. The experience strengthened his understanding of workplace training, project management, and collaborative software development in a professional environment.	<i>As a result of this externship, I hope to place an even greater emphasis on authentic, collaborative projects that require students to practice communication, teamwork, and critical thinking while working toward a common goal.</i>
TM	Friends of the Family, Waterloo	Jon Dennis, Waterloo Career Center	Jon worked with the development team at Friends of the Family, an eastern Iowa nonprofit serving individuals experiencing homelessness or domestic violence. He explored ways artificial intelligence could improve internal operations by supporting staff with training simulations, drafting communications, and streamlining behind-the-scenes tasks. His work focused on using technology to increase organizational efficiency while allowing advocates to spend more time directly serving clients. The experience demonstrated how emerging technologies can strengthen nonprofit operations and enhance community impact.	<i>I can already see how important it will be in my classroom to have students work even more collaboratively, especially to identify, plan, and implement creative solutions to real-world problems.</i>
TM	Guthrie Grove Retreat Center	Michael Dorland, Missouri Valley CSD	Michael worked at the Guthrie Grove Retreat Center, where he designed and implemented a new campus-wide wireless network. His responsibilities included project planning, site surveys, equipment procurement, cabling, installation, and network optimization. He configured network and security settings to meet the needs of staff and campers while collaborating daily with on-site staff and the board. Michael also expanded his knowledge of wireless protocols and radio frequency principles. During installation delays, he assisted with plumbing, carpentry, and facility repairs, gaining valuable hands-on experience that enhanced his classroom instruction.	<i>Biggest takeaway is to "stay flexible". The campers are on their vacation so their priorities are not the same as mine. I have to have the flexibility to switch from engineer mode to customer service mode dozens of times a day.</i>

	Workplace Host	Teacher Extern	Description of Project	Extern Quote
TM	Harrison County Welcome Center, Missouri Valley	Clint Sargent, Missouri Valley CSD	Clint completed his externship with the Harrison County Historical Village and Welcome Center, where he digitized and organized historical artifact records dating back to the museum's founding. He scanned documents, improved digital archives, and helped implement a new point-of-sale system by organizing retail inventory. Throughout the experience, Clint applied technology, research, and data management skills while supporting museum operations and visitor services. His work improved record accessibility, strengthened inventory management, and helped preserve the history of Harrison County for future generations.	<i>One thing that I have discovered is the best way to strengthen relationships between workplaces and classrooms is through ongoing partnerships rather than one-time events.</i>
TM	HNI Corporation, Muscatine	Trever Moore, Pleasant Valley	Trever completed his externship with HNI Furniture's Information and Digital Technology Integration Team. He developed an interactive dashboard that filtered and analyzed operational data to provide insights into server performance and workflow efficiency. Throughout the project, Trever applied software development, data analysis, and business intelligence skills while collaborating with technology professionals. The experience strengthened his problem-solving abilities and demonstrated how data visualization and analytics support informed decision-making and continuous improvement within a manufacturing environment.	<i>Students need to improve the skill of being able to adapt to the situation and have strategies for working through problems with unknown answers.</i>
TM	Homesteaders Life Company, West Des Moines	Thor Heimdal, Dallas Center Grimes CSD	Thor worked on the Actuarial team at Homesteaders Life Company, where he developed Excel-based tools to support business analysis and decision-making. His projects included creating resources for sales projections and premium calculations while helping evaluate the reliability of key profitability metrics. Through his work, Thor gained experience applying mathematical modeling, data analysis, and spreadsheet design to real-world business challenges. The externship strengthened his understanding of actuarial processes and demonstrated how quantitative skills can support strategic planning and organizational decision-making.	<i>I've definitely noted that corporate work requires more independence than lots of teachers give their students. This is very true in a problem-solving context."</i>
TM	Lennox, Marshalltown	Andrea Tollefson, West Marshall	Andrea worked as a quality contractor with the Quality Control team at Lennox Industries. She created interactive Power BI dashboards using data collected through Microsoft Forms to improve reporting and decision-making processes. Throughout the externship, Andrea collaborated with team members while learning about quality control procedures and the manufacturing and assembly of heating and cooling systems. The experience strengthened her skills in data analysis, business intelligence, technology integration, and teamwork while providing valuable insight into advanced manufacturing operations.	<i>My biggest takeaway is the importance of planning. Some of my processes would have been simplified had I seen the bigger picture of which tools would be incorporated and where they need to live.</i>
TM	Marquette Museum and Depot, Marquette	Madyson Larson MFL-MarMac CSD	Madyson completed her externship with the Marquette Historical Society, where she enhanced visitor engagement by creating interactive QR codes for museum exhibits. Each code linked visitors to educational videos and puzzle pieces that formed a completed image highlighting the area's history. She also updated the museum brochure to ensure visitors received accurate and current information. The experience strengthened her skills in digital media, historical interpretation, and public education while helping modernize the museum's visitor experience.	<i>Tackling and dealing with road-block and struggles was the most impactful thing this summer.</i>
TM	McGregor Historical Society, McGregor	Elise Martins, MFL – Mar Mac CSD	Elise completed her externship at the McGregor Historical Museum, where she digitally archived photographs and historical documents using the PastPerfect collections management system. She cataloged artifacts, designed permanent and temporary exhibits, developed hands-on activities for young visitors, and trained two high school students participating in the Iowa Workforce Development Work Experience Program. Elise also led museum tours, sharing local history and folklore with visitors. The experience strengthened her skills in museum collections management, public history, education, leadership, and community engagement while preserving important historical resources.	<i>As a teacher, I need to figure out how to teach my students the ability to troubleshoot (smaller) issues on their own, become more self-sustainable, and also work on confidence building.</i>
TM	MidAmerican Energy, Urbandale	Barb Burns, Dowling Catholic	During her externship with MidAmerican Energy, Barb collaborated with the Talent Management team to enhance the CEWD Energy Industry Fundamentals 2.0 curriculum for returning high school interns. She helped modernize training materials by converting existing content into updated videos and short microlearning modules. Barb also improved the organization, usability, and accuracy of human resources websites and training resources. Through these projects, she gained valuable experience in workforce development, instructional design, and employee training while supporting professional learning initiatives.	<i>The balance is not about choosing between academic content and career skills—it's about weaving them together, so students learn deeply, apply knowledge meaningfully, and develop a passion for lifelong learning.</i>

	Workplace Host	Teacher Extern	Description of Project	Extern Quote
TM	PAWS & More, Washington	Andrew Koshatka, Washington CSD	Andrew completed his externship with PAWS & More, the Washington County Humane Society, where he supported the organization's financial planning and operational initiatives. He collaborated on developing budget projections using organizational data to forecast financial health and sustainability. Andrew also gained experience in crowdfunding, website maintenance, and online store development to support fundraising efforts. The experience strengthened his understanding of nonprofit management, financial planning, and digital communications while contributing to the organization's mission of caring for animals.	<i>My biggest takeaway is how many projects they have that they typically are unable to accomplish due to the high needs of the animals and level of public facing services they supply.</i>
	NewBoCo, Cedar Rapids	Becky Herman, Iowa BIG	Becky completed her externship with NewBoCo K–12 Education, where she helped expand computer science programming for middle school students. She secured a STEM Explore grant that funded student participation in NewBoCo's Coding Camp, directed the camp, and engaged Iowa BIG high school students as mentors and counselors. Becky also collaborated with fellow externs to develop computer science curriculum for future classroom use. The experience strengthened her skills in grant writing, curriculum development, program leadership, and work-based learning while preparing her for her role as a STEM and Work-Based Learning Coordinator.	<i>If we can get kids to recognize there is a human impact in their work, they will start to empathized and lean into the project and the learning.</i>
TM	NewBoCo, Cedar Rapids	Amy Tursi, Marion CSD	Amy Tursi completed an Iowa Educator Externship with NewBoCo, where she supported the development of computer science learning activities for K–12 students. She helped create lessons focused on topics including artificial intelligence, coding, and sensors while providing feedback from the perspective of a high school science teacher. Amy contributed to making the activities engaging, classroom-ready, and accessible for learners with varying levels of computer science experience. The experience strengthened her understanding of computer science education and curriculum development.	<i>It is refreshing to be reminded how successful people negotiate and work through problems.</i>
TM	NewBoCo, Cedar Rapids	Ryley Robinson, Marion CSD	Ryley completed his externship with NewBoCo, where he developed lesson plans and activities for a summer coding camp while helping translate Iowa's updated computer science standards into an easy-to-use reference guide for educators. He also contributed to artificial intelligence lesson development and explored connections between biomimicry and computer science to integrate biology concepts into computing instruction. The experience strengthened his curriculum development, technology integration, and collaboration skills while supporting computer science education across Iowa.	<i>I love the idea of showing students that in a country and world in which mass production and corporate living has taken over, it's okay to run your own business and create the things that make you passionate.</i>
TM	Three Trees Data, Lake City	Marcus Feldhans, South Central Calhoun CSD	Marcus worked with Three Trees Data, providing technical support and technology solutions for a local school district. He troubleshooted hardware and software issues, maintained technology infrastructure, and collaborated with district staff to ensure reliable technology services for students and educators. His work helped improve the efficiency of educational systems while supporting classroom instruction and daily operations. The experience strengthened his technical support, problem-solving, and communication skills while expanding his understanding of educational technology systems.	<i>The experience reminded me that learning a new topic can often feel overwhelming, especially when students are encountering unfamiliar concepts for the first time.</i>

Field Sciences Descriptions

	Workplace Host	Teacher Extern	Description of Project	Extern Quote
FS	Bayer Crop Science, Williamsburg	Harley Doty, South Tama CSD	Harley worked with the Field Operations Team at Bayer Crop Science, gaining hands-on experience in crop analysis through drone technology, field observations, and laboratory tissue testing. She completed a time study of field operations to improve future labor planning and identified opportunities to simplify employee training. Harley also developed clearer training materials to better support seasonal employees. The experience strengthened her skills in agricultural research, data collection, workforce training, and process improvement while contributing to the efficiency of field operations.	<i>The scientific process is definitely at work here, as they do a wonderful job of setting controls and checking for one trait at a time.</i>
FS	Blank Park Zoo, Des Moines	Ben DeFord, Des Moines Christian	During his externship at Blank Park Zoo, Ben worked with the education team to deliver programs for zoo guests and summer camp participants. He also traveled with outreach staff to present educational programs featuring zoo animals at daycares, libraries, nursing homes, and other community organizations. In addition, Ben shadowed animal care teams to learn about exhibit management and daily zoo operations. The experience strengthened his skills in environmental education, public engagement, and animal care while providing insight into careers in zoological education.	<i>The ambassador animals are never forced to comply with the zoo staff. I hadn't given animal choice a whole lot of thought, but it's cool to see that zoo staff are so careful to be kind to the animals they steward.</i>
FS	Buchanan County Conservation Hazelton	Carter Harris, Independence CSD	Carter worked with the Buchanan County Conservation Board, supporting summer camps, nature programs, and educational events throughout the county. He prepared instructional materials, developed new activity ideas, and worked directly with students during camp programs. Carter also contributed to park maintenance and helped create a courthouse display featuring Devonian-period fossils. The experience strengthened his skills in environmental education, public programming, and conservation while providing valuable opportunities to engage community members of all ages.	<i>As a high school teacher, it has been fun to work with elementary aged kid. I have enjoyed hearing all of the questions they have had and see how advanced some kids are. It also has opened my eyes to some activities that I can do in my classroom.</i>
FS	Buchanan County Conservation Hazelton	Nikki, Shannon, Wapsie Valley CSD	Nikki completed her externship with Buchanan County Conservation, where she assisted with children's day camps, community nature programs, and park improvement projects. She helped maintain Fontana Park and other county parks while creating educational displays and collaborating with naturalists to develop engaging programming for visitors of all ages. The experience strengthened her skills in environmental education, park management, and community outreach while encouraging greater appreciation of Iowa's natural resources.	<i>I really enjoy contributing to experiences that encourage kids to connect with and learn about local wildlife in a hands-on way.</i>
FS	Cass County Conservation, Lewis	Stacey Young, Exira Elk Horn Kimballton Elementary School	Stacey completed her externship with Cass County Conservation, where she updated K–8 summer camp and school programming to incorporate more STEM learning while aligning activities with the Next Generation Science Standards. She assisted with planning and leading camps and youth programs that emphasized scientific investigation, mathematics, collaboration, and conservation. Stacey also partnered with local libraries and extension offices to expand hands-on STEM opportunities for students throughout the county. The experience strengthened her curriculum development, community partnership, and environmental education skills.	<i>Kids can get stuck in one particular mindset and it can be really hard to change their opinion. Having a guest speaker share their day-to-day experiences can help broaden their horizons.</i>
FS	Cedar County Conservation, Tipton	Adam Brown, Davenport Mid-City High School	Adam completed his externship with Cedar County Conservation, where he learned how a county naturalist engaged the community through environmental education. He assisted with programs that included nature exploration, outdoor cooking, geocaching, and mapmaking while working alongside conservation staff. Adam also completed bumble bee monitoring training, learning how to safely capture, identify, and release native bees. He participated in efforts to document the endangered Rusty Patched Bumble Bee by photographing bees at designated survey sites. The experience expanded his field research skills while deepening his understanding of conservation education and wildlife monitoring.	<i>Having students understand they are learning more skills than just how to find the value of x, they are following given rules with approved steps to solve a complex problem, sometimes in an atypical way.</i>

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FS	City of Des Moines Forestry, Des Moines	Michelle Delvaux, Newton CSD	Michelle completed her externship with the City of Des Moines Urban Forestry Department, where she updated tree inventories using TreeKeeper software, evaluated planting sites, and inspected tree health throughout the city. She also created promotional videos, developed a self-guided Tree Identification Trail, and researched grant opportunities. Working alongside urban forestry professionals, Michelle supported community tree initiatives, including the Homegrown Urban Nursery Program. The experience strengthened her knowledge of urban forestry, tree management, community outreach, and environmental stewardship while providing practical experience with municipal conservation programs.	<i>When they know their teacher does things like this in the summer, they begin to see me as a real scientist and not just a teacher so it lends a little more credibility.</i>
FS	City of Des Moines Forestry, Des Moines	Phillip Seiwert, Dallas Center Grimes, CSD	Phillip completed his externship with the City of Des Moines Urban Forestry Division, where he supported efforts to expand community involvement in preserving the city's tree canopy. He collected data on tree health using field and technology-based tools and helped launch a Heritage Tree Program to identify and recognize significant trees throughout Des Moines. The experience strengthened his skills in urban forestry, data collection, and community engagement while promoting long-term conservation and appreciation of the city's natural resources.	<i>It's been great to see how excited the community is to get involved. The most interesting part of the experience so far is seeing how much passion for trees exist among employees.</i>
FS	Climax Molybdenum / Lee County, Montrose	Kristen Finney, Keokuk CSD	During her second externship with Climax Molybdenum and Lee County Conservation, Kristen developed a freshwater mussel educational display for STEM events to teach students about the importance of mussels in the Mississippi River ecosystem. She also assisted naturalists with summer day camps and helped create new STEM Bins that teachers can borrow for classroom instruction. The experience strengthened her skills in environmental education, curriculum development, and conservation outreach while creating lasting educational resources for students and teachers.	<i>It's always a great day when we are working with the naturalists! It's also been beneficial to get to know Clay and Lia better and know how activities are prepared for each class/grade.</i>
FS	Clinton County Conservation, Grand Mound	Eric Brown, Clinton CSD	Eric worked alongside Natural Resources and Conservation Technicians to maintain public hunting and wildlife areas in Clinton County. His primary focus was supporting biodiversity by helping prevent and manage invasive species through monitoring, maintenance, and habitat restoration efforts. He assisted with land and equipment maintenance while evaluating areas requiring intervention to reduce invasive plant encroachment. The work demanded adaptability, teamwork, and problem-solving as environmental conditions continually changed. Eric's contributions supported ongoing conservation efforts and highlighted the importance of consistent habitat management for protecting Iowa's natural ecosystems.	<i>It is common to hear employees speaking in terms of rates, unit rates, and ratios. One discussion was about the 99 Iowa Counties and the ratio of public hunting land to total land area in each county.</i>
FS	Clinton County Conservation, Grand Mound	Evan Haan, Clinton CSD	Evan worked with the naturalists at Clinton County Conservation to develop and present environmental education programs for audiences of all ages. He helped lead summer camps, public programs, and large community events such as the BioBlitz. In addition, Evan assisted with daily operations and animal care at the Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center and Eden Valley Nature Center. The experience strengthened his skills in environmental education, public engagement, animal care, and conservation while providing valuable insight into natural resource careers.	<i>The people I work with would be great guest speakers to talk about various jobs kids could have if they are interested in animals and nature. I think that kids don't realize the variety of jobs that are available.</i>
FS	Clinton County Conservation, Grand Mound	Emma Bopp, Calamus Wheatland CSD	During her externship with Clinton County Conservation, Emma worked alongside naturalists to lead summer camps for students in kindergarten through fifth grade. She assisted with educational activities, cared for resident animals by feeding, cleaning, and monitoring their health, and supported daily conservation center operations. Emma also helped update informational brochures for the conservation campgrounds, improving educational resources for visitors. Her experience strengthened her skills in environmental education, animal care, and public outreach.	<i>Students need a good understanding of scientific concepts but they also need to develop skills that will be used in their future job.</i>

	Workplace Host	Teacher Extern	Description of Project	Extern Quote
FS	Dickinson County Conservation Okoboji	Amy Walter, North Union CSD	During her externship at the Dickinson County Nature Center, Amy assisted with summer camps and environmental education programs that encouraged children to explore and appreciate nature. She created hands-on activities, co-taught the weekly Nature Explorers program, and developed engaging lessons for participants. Amy's primary project involved designing educational grab bags filled with themed games, crafts, and activities that allowed families to continue learning after visiting the nature center. The experience expanded her environmental education skills and provided classroom-ready resources and activities she planned to incorporate into her earth and life science instruction.	<i>I feel the more we expose our students to possible careers, the more likely they are more explore different career paths as they near the end of high school.</i>
FS	DMACC Horticulture, Ankeny	Brooke Finney, Bondurant-Farrar CSD	During her externship with the DMACC Horticulture Department, Brooke gained hands-on experience in greenhouse operations, plant production, and horticulture education. She assisted with greenhouse maintenance, seed inventory, plant propagation, and tree planting while collaborating with faculty to redesign an educational lesson for fifth-grade students. Brooke explored ways to connect horticulture concepts with elementary classroom instruction and developed ideas for hands-on learning activities. The experience strengthened her understanding of horticultural practices while building meaningful connections between agriculture and K–12 education.	<i>It is so valuable, even at the young age of 9 to talk to students about what opportunities are out there for them as they are exploring their interests!</i>
FS	Driftless Area Wetlands Centre, Marquette	Janita Stavroplus, Clayton Ridge CSD	Janita completed her externship as an Environmental Educator at the Driftless Area Wetlands Centre, where she guided children through nature exploration during summer camps, welcomed visitors, and supported community outreach events, including the local farmer's market. She also developed interpretive displays for indoor and outdoor exhibits that highlighted the region's natural resources. The experience strengthened her skills in environmental education, science communication, and community engagement while providing authentic experiences she could bring back to her classroom.	<i>The staff pull from their diverse backgrounds to maintain these native habitats and educate the community about their benefits through hands-on, real-world learning.</i>
FS	Effigy Mounds National Monument, Harpers Ferry	Dale Hanson, MFL MarMac CSD	Dale completed his externship at Effigy Mounds National Monument, where he created a brochure and self-guided tour highlighting the restored prairie in the park's North Unit. Working alongside park staff, he identified native prairie plants and learned about their ecological importance and cultural significance to Indigenous communities. Dale also presented guided tours, conducted educational demonstrations, and served as a trail rover to assist visitors. The experience strengthened his knowledge of prairie ecology, interpretation, and environmental education.	<i>I will be able to use skills learned here to better my teaching and just having knowledge of how other professions operate is invaluable as a teacher.</i>
FS	Fayette County Conservation, Fayette	Marissa Davis, Postville CSD	Marissa served as an Environmental Educator at Gilbertson Nature Center, where she planned and led summer camp activities including hiking, fishing, pond studies, crafts, and nature exploration for students of different ages. She also developed a museum exhibit highlighting Elgin's historic corn maze by interviewing organizers and collecting artifacts to preserve its community impact. In addition, Marissa updated educational programs to align with grade-level standards, revised educator communications, and strengthened partnerships with local schools. The experience expanded her skills in environmental education, curriculum development, community engagement, and historical interpretation.	<i>In a short amount of time, I was exposed to SO MUCH KNOWLEDGE! I'm excited to use some of it on our annual field trip in the Fall!</i>
FS	Indian Creek Nature Center, Cedar Rapids	Jim Glad, Isaac Newton Christian Academy	Jim completed his externship at Indian Creek Nature Center, where he gained hands-on experience in a wide range of conservation and education activities. He evaluated trails, assisted with field trips and summer camps, supported farm operations, and completed routine grounds maintenance. By contributing to diverse projects throughout the property, Jim developed a deeper understanding of environmental education, land stewardship, and conservation management. The experience broadened his knowledge of outdoor learning while providing practical examples to enhance classroom instruction.	<i>In the classroom, we need to emphasize when a guess for an answer is appropriate, when we can discuss with each other before answering, and when we can look for an answer using technology.</i>
FS	Iowa DNR, Decorah Fish Hatchery	Tracy Nuss, North Fayette Valley, CSD	Tracy completed his externship at the Decorah Fish Hatchery, where he worked with the watershed coordinator and Luther College to monitor soil and water quality on local farms. He collected data on nitrate levels, turbidity, temperature, and dissolved oxygen to support environmental research. In addition, Tracy assisted with daily hatchery operations by feeding trout, maintaining raceways, and sampling fish populations. The experience strengthened his understanding of water quality, fisheries management, and environmental monitoring.	<i>Doing my first stocking run was especially enjoyable because I got to interact with a lot of fishermen. They were all so happy to see me coming, and I stopped to talk with a few of them.</i>

	Workplace Host	Teacher Extern	Description of Project	Extern Quote
FS	Iowa DNR, Big Marsh, Parkersburg	Travis Angell, Waverly Shell Rock CSD	During his externship with the Iowa DNR at Big Marsh in Parkersburg, Travis worked alongside staff to support wetland habitat management and conservation. He planted and maintained food plots, assisted with dike and grounds maintenance, and participated in bird tagging and banding projects. Travis also learned about the planning, management, and restoration practices used to sustain healthy wetland ecosystems. Through these hands-on experiences, he gained valuable knowledge of wildlife management, habitat restoration, and the daily responsibilities involved in conserving Iowa's natural resources.	<i>This experience continues to strengthen my belief that meaningful learning happens when people understand why the knowledge matters.</i>
FS	Iowa DNR, George Wyth State Park, Waterloo	Aaron Gibney, St. Patrick's, Cedar Falls	During his externship at George Wyth State Park, Aaron explored strategies to reduce stormwater runoff into George Wyth Lake. He collaborated with conservation professionals to identify native prairie plants and wildflowers that could improve water quality and ecosystem health. Aaron also created educational signage explaining the causes and impacts of runoff for park visitors. Through these projects, he strengthened his communication, research, and problem-solving skills while gaining practical experience in environmental conservation. The experience provided valuable classroom connections for teaching watershed management and sustainability.	<i>At George Wyth it is important to understand we are out in nature and that our actions can have consequences to people and animals."</i>
FS	Iowa DNR, Lewis	Adam Hietbrink, Red Oak CSD	During his externship, Adam Hietbrink assisted with fisheries research focused on monitoring blue catfish populations. He participated in electrofishing surveys, collecting, identifying, measuring, and recording fish to support population assessments. Adam also prepared and examined aging structures while organizing laboratory data used for fisheries management. His work provided valuable field and laboratory experience while contributing accurate scientific data for research and conservation. The externship strengthened his understanding of fisheries biology, data collection, and natural resource management.	<i>Learning about blue catfish and the role they play in Iowa waters gave me a greater appreciation for the work fisheries professionals do behind the scenes to support both conservation and recreational fishing.</i>
FS	Iowa DNR at Spirit Lake Fish Hatchery	Jon Allen, Okoboji CSD	Jon worked as a Fisheries Technician with the Iowa DNR at the Spirit Lake Hatchery. He operated equipment including hoop nets, an electrofishing boat, an airboat, and grounds maintenance equipment. As a member of the fisheries team, he collected water samples, captured and measured fish, and assisted with monitoring aquatic populations. Jon also helped maintain hatchery facilities and surrounding grounds, gaining practical experience in fisheries management, habitat stewardship, and the daily operations required to support Iowa's fisheries and natural resources.	<i>I am on an island as the only science teacher in my grade level. This work is more representative of a work experience. I feel like this will help me convey to the students what collaboration looks like in a classroom and "the real world".</i>
FS	Iowa DNR Sweet Marsh, Sumner	Sean Singewald, Postville CSD	Sean completed his externship with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Team at Sweet Marsh Wildlife Management Area. He contributed to habitat improvement projects, established wildlife food plots, participated in songbird capture and goose banding efforts, and assisted with endangered species research. Sean also monitored prairie restoration projects and developed a prairie species inventory to evaluate restoration progress. The experience strengthened his understanding of wildlife biology, habitat management, and conservation research.	<i>I feel more confident in 'doing science' again.</i>
FS	Iowa DNR Sweet Marsh, Sumner	Geoff Maurer, New Hampton CSD	Geoff completed his externship with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Team at Sweet Marsh Wildlife Management Area. He assisted with habitat management projects, facility maintenance, food plot establishment, dove and goose banding, wildlife tracking, and endangered species monitoring. Working alongside DNR professionals, Geoff gained firsthand experience in wildlife conservation and habitat restoration while learning about the daily operations of a wildlife management area. The experience strengthened his understanding of conservation practices and natural resource management.	<i>It was exciting to see and work with so many DNR and Conservationists.</i>
FS	Iowa Young Birders, Ames	Hannah Haarhues-Casey, Lewis Central CSD	Hannah served as an education specialist with Iowa Young Birders, where she developed K–12 lessons and activities to help teachers incorporate native bird studies into their classrooms. She also supported outreach efforts by leading a birding program at a new location in southwest Iowa and encouraging young people to explore local wildlife. Through her work, Hannah gained a deeper understanding of Iowa's native bird species and discovered practical ways to integrate conservation and environmental education into a variety of academic subjects.	<i>People who are passionate and have a vision can really make a difference.</i>

	Workplace Host	Teacher Extern	Description of Project	Extern Quote
FS	Jasper County Conservation, Newton	Micaela Scott, Newton CSD	Micaela completed her externship with Jasper County Conservation, where she planned and led two summer camps focused on prairie life and weather education. She also assisted with nature story times and educational programs at the new Dana King Ceretti Environmental Education Center. Through engaging activities centered on birds, frogs, insects, rocks, and outdoor exploration, Micaela helped connect children and families with nature. The experience strengthened her skills in environmental education, program development, and community outreach.	<i>I am struck by the flexibility and trust given to the employees at my site. Being an extern, my role is even more flexible, but it is nice to be trusted to do my work, track my hours, and work to create meaningful things.</i>
FS	Jones County Conservation, Center Junction	Cassie Bowdre, Lisbon CSD	Cassie completed an externship with Jones County Conservation, where she documented the parks through photography to showcase their natural beauty and biodiversity. She assisted with youth conservation camps, supporting educational activities and service projects that encouraged environmental stewardship. Cassie also participated in bat monitoring by helping process bats for White-nose Syndrome research, contributing to wildlife conservation and disease surveillance efforts. Through her photography and conservation work, she supported public education while helping promote and protect Iowa's natural resources.	<i>After my last Externship, I quickly realized that as educators, we can help students better enjoy the learning process quite simply by letting them ask questions and drive their own learning.</i>
FS	Lauritzen Gardens, Omaha, NE	Emma Anunson, Bishop Heelan Catholic School	Emma worked in the Plant Collections Department at Lauritzen Gardens, where she focused on plant data collection and the integration of geospatial information. As the gardens expanded their use of digital mapping, she researched and utilized programs including IrisBG, ArcGIS, and Esri to organize, map, and analyze plant records. Emma also continued inventorying and updating plant collection data within IrisBG. Her work supported the development of more efficient plant management systems while expanding her knowledge of geospatial technology and botanical data management.	<i>While there have already been points of great progress and points where I get stuck, I believe that this summer will also reinforce the importance of determination to succeed in learning.</i>
FS	Mahaska County Conservation, Oskaloosa	Stephanie Visser, Oskaloosa CSD	Stephanie completed her externship with Mahaska County Conservation, collaborating with conservation staff, Green Iowa AmeriCorps members, and local conservation partners. She participated in native prairie restoration projects, helped establish prairie habitat around the Oxbow Wetlands at Caldwell Park, and supported maintenance and improvement projects at several county conservation areas. Stephanie expanded her knowledge of conservation practices while strengthening professional relationships with environmental educators and natural resource professionals. The experience provided valuable real-world connections she will continue to incorporate into her classroom.	<i>My connections from my externships over the past 4 summers has really enabled me to provide a lot of extra resources through networking.</i>
FS	Mahaska County Conservation, Oskaloosa	Morgan Ernst, Pella, CSD	Morgan completed her externship with Mahaska County Conservation, where she focused on prairie restoration and habitat improvement projects throughout the county. She assisted with establishing new prairie plantings, removing invasive species, and restoring native ecosystems around oxbows and other conservation areas. In addition to restoration work, Morgan supported daily operations at the Environmental Learning Center by helping maintain facilities and improve visitor experiences. The externship strengthened her understanding of habitat restoration, conservation management, and environmental stewardship.	<i>I think it could be argued that most people use some form of math in their careers and daily lives. The challenging part is getting them to realize it.</i>
FS	Marshall County Conservation, Marshalltown	Angie Dudley, GMG CSD	Angie Dudley completed her externship with the Marshall County Conservation Board, where she assisted the naturalist with summer camps for preschool through sixth-grade students. She managed social media content, including the annual LEGO Minifigure Scavenger Hunt across 31 county parks, and developed curriculum resources that aligned science standards with CKLA and English Language Arts standards. Angie also created a topic guide to support collaboration between teachers and conservation staff when planning field trips and lessons. She concluded her externship by presenting educational programs on bats and the importance of bees as pollinators in Iowa ecosystems.	<i>Being able to work alongside the people here has given me opportunities to collaborate and make connections that would not have happened otherwise.</i>
FS	Marshall County Conservation, Marshalltown	Marty King, East Marshall CSD	Marty completed an externship focused on bat conservation research, where she contributed to a new grant project tracking bats through acoustic monitoring of their calls. She analyzed and organized recorded data before uploading findings to a national database, supporting one of the first studies of its kind in Iowa. The research will provide valuable information for future planning decisions, including infrastructure development and wind energy projects. Through this experience, Marty strengthened her data management and spreadsheet skills while gaining a deeper understanding of the importance of local wildlife conservation.	<i>I have had to bring out problem solving skills an insane amount. I think I will emphasize that. If I ran to my boss every time I ran into a snag, she wouldn't get anything else done. I need kids to learn to exhaust their ideas before coming to me.</i>

	Workplace Host	Teacher Extern	Description of Project	Extern Quote
FS	Muscatine County Conservation, Muscatine	Marnee Acker, Muscatine CSD	Marnee worked as a Naturalist Extern with the Environmental Learning Center in Muscatine, where she completed a wide variety of environmental education and animal care tasks. She cared for and fed raptors, amphibians, and reptiles, maintained equipment such as kayaks, and interpreted nature for river cruise tours. She also led hands-on activities with students, including building aquatic habitats, dissecting owl pellets, and teaching Native American games during summer camps. Throughout the externship, Marnee strengthened her communication skills by engaging diverse audiences and creating opportunities for Spanish-speaking visitors to connect with nature.	<i>Through these experiences, we can say exactly why students need to learn "stuff" in class. Think about how many students' lives are enriched with these experiences.</i>
FS	Muscatine County Conservation, Muscatine	Michelle Haller, Muscatine CSD	Michelle completed her externship with Muscatine County Conservation, where she assisted with nature camps and educational programs for learners of all ages. She expanded her knowledge of conservation, environmental education, and natural resources while sharing those experiences with the public. Michelle also designed a composting project for her school that will support on-site learning gardens and provide students with hands-on lessons in sustainability. The externship strengthened her confidence in outdoor education and provided meaningful experiences she could bring back to her classroom.	<i>This hands-on experience allowed my students to really learn and understand about the monarch butterflies and the importance of taking care of our school's pollinator garden to provide them with what they need.</i>
FS	National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium, Dubuque	William Lange, Dubuque CSD	Billy worked as a part-time educator at the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium, where he supported tours, camps, outreach programs, exhibits, and educational programming. He assisted with a variety of public-facing activities while gaining experience in museum education and visitor engagement. Billy also helped develop new conservation-themed outreach programs designed to increase public awareness of environmental stewardship. The experience strengthened his communication, educational programming, and public engagement skills while supporting the museum's conservation mission.	<i>I have learned so many new things related to science that I don't even know where to start. The funniest thing I have learned is that animals will hitchhike on other animals when they are transported.</i>
FS	Page County Landfill, Clarinda	Daniel DeGroot, Red Oak CSD	During his externship at the Page County Landfill, Daniel gained firsthand knowledge of waste management, recycling, hazardous material disposal, wastewater treatment, and water quality monitoring. He learned how landfill operations safely manage a wide variety of materials while protecting public health and the environment. The experience provided valuable insight into environmental systems and sustainability practices that impact communities every day. Daniel expanded his understanding of environmental science and discovered practical examples he could incorporate into classroom instruction.	<i>Garbage is someone's problem, not mine'" The reality is much different. There are costs associated with handling of trash and recyclables. There are community costs to running landfill.</i>
FS	Pottawattamie County Conservation, Council Bluffs	Laurie Bancroft, Council Bluffs CSD	Laurie Bancroft completed a Real-World Externship at Hitchcock Nature Center in Pottawattamie County. She assisted with summer camp programming while researching native and invasive trees and prairie plants. Her primary project focused on developing a curriculum lesson about native trees and wood carving for her high school students. Laurie collaborated closely with park naturalists and explored a variety of conservation careers, gaining practical experience in environmental education, curriculum development, and natural resource management.	<i>I think explaining to students why I was teaching a lesson and what I wanted them to learn, and connecting it to real-life jobs and workplace experiences, creates more engagement among students.</i>
FS	Pottawattamie County Conservation, Botna Bend	Amy Parker, AHSTW CSD	Amy completed her STEM Teacher Externship with Pottawattamie Conservation at Botna Bend Park. She supported invasive species management by helping establish grazing areas for goats used in targeted vegetation control. Amy also researched and designed interpretive signs highlighting the park's natural and cultural resources, including prairie ecosystems, bison, elk, and Native American history. The experience strengthened her understanding of conservation management, environmental interpretation, and outdoor education while creating educational resources that enhance visitor learning and appreciation of Iowa's natural heritage.	<i>This project has given me a greater appreciation for the biodiversity within the park and the importance of monitoring native species. It has been interesting to connect what I teach about ecosystems and biodiversity to real conservation work happening in our local community.</i>
FS	Poweshiek County Conservation, Montezuma	Brady Lehrman, Grinnell Newberg CSD	Brady completed his externship with Poweshiek County Conservation, where he assisted in planning and leading environmental education programs for children and adults. He helped facilitate activities such as kayaking, fishing, prairie walks, and other outdoor experiences while supporting programming at Diamond Lake. Brady also wrote articles for the local newspaper to promote conservation activities and community engagement. Drawing on his teaching experience, he helped develop programs aligned with science standards, creating meaningful outdoor learning opportunities that connected environmental education with classroom instruction.	<i>My big takeaway has to be how much time is dedicated to putting on fun programs for kids during the summer and just how much thought goes into putting them on.</i>

	Workplace Host	Teacher Extern	Description of Project	Extern Quote
FS	Reiman Gardens, Ames	Anna Brooks, Ames CSD	Anna worked as a member of the summer education staff at Reiman Gardens, where she gained experience across multiple horticulture and education programs. She supported the Grow and Give Program, outdoor and indoor horticulture operations, and STEM summer camps while collaborating with staff from several departments. Anna assisted with maintaining gardens, caring for greenhouse spaces, growing and donating produce, and educating visitors about horticulture. She also developed practical skills in plant care, greenhouse operations, and integrated pest management while supporting the gardens' educational mission.	<i>Through my experience, I have learned how classroom concepts such as plant anatomy, soil science, ecosystems, environmental management, and career readiness directly connect to real-world careers.</i>
FS	Reiman Gardens, Ames	Brandon Frohwein, Colo Nesco CSD	Brandon completed his externship at Reiman Gardens, where he gained experience in entomology, horticulture, and environmental education. He assisted with projects in the USDA Insect Lab and Butterfly Wing, supported greenhouse and garden operations, and helped teach two STEAM education camps. Throughout the summer, Brandon collaborated with staff and volunteers across multiple departments while learning about insect care, plant management, and educational programming. The experience expanded his knowledge of horticulture and entomology while strengthening his skills in teamwork, communication, and public education.	<i>The biggest takeaway is the vast array of people it takes to keep the gardens going and how well all of those people work together.</i>
FS	Sac County Conservation, Sac City	Nekooshia Plueger, Galva Holstein CSD	Neko completed her externship by assisting with conservation summer camps, library programs, and outdoor education events for students in grades K–6 and ages 11–14. She collaborated with staff to teach nature exploration, fishing, canoeing, kayaking, hunting safety, fire building, and wildlife tracking while encouraging responsible outdoor recreation. Throughout the summer, Neko helped create engaging, hands-on learning experiences that connected young people with Iowa's natural resources. The experience strengthened her collaboration, communication, and environmental education skills while inspiring the next generation of outdoor enthusiasts.	<i>Always wanting to learn is a life skill. Always wanting to question is a life skill. Working with anyone no matter their age and being able to think and change with them to succeed is a life skill.</i>
FS	UNI Tallgrass Prairie Center, Cedar Falls	Benjamin Olsen, Cedar Falls CSD	Ben completed his externship with the Plant Materials Team at the UNI Tallgrass Prairie Center, where he participated in every stage of native seed production. He planted seedlings, maintained research plots, harvested prairie grasses and wildflowers, and processed seeds in the laboratory. Ben also helped prepare for the annual Open House and crop inspections while assisting with research projects, including milkweed and monarch butterfly surveys. The experience expanded his understanding of prairie ecosystems, native plant restoration, biodiversity, and the conservation efforts that support Iowa's remaining prairie landscapes.	<i>The most important skill is the ability to have a plan, but then the willingness to deviate from the plan to work a better solution.</i>
FS	USACE Coralville	Shanti Sellz, Iowa City CSD	Shanti completed her externship with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at Coralville Lake Recreation Area, where she supported land stewardship, visitor education, and trail maintenance projects. She applied her knowledge of agriculture and landscape ecology to help manage heavily used trails, campgrounds, and recreation areas while promoting visitor safety and environmental stewardship. The experience strengthened her understanding of public land management and conservation while supporting the protection and enjoyment of Iowa's natural resources.	<i>Land management work requires a lot of critical thinking, especially when using large and powerful equipment and dealing with hazards such as snags, fallen trees, and broken tree limbs.</i>
FS	USACE Mississippi River Project Office, Rock Island, IL	Brianna Finnegan, Pleasant Valley CSD	During her externship with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Brianna worked with the Environmental Stewardship team on forestry and habitat restoration projects within the Mississippi River Project. She learned to conduct tree surveys, assist with forest restoration planning, and develop management prescriptions for contractors. Brianna also gained experience collecting and analyzing water quality samples from the Mississippi River to support environmental monitoring efforts. The experience expanded her knowledge of forestry, ecosystem restoration, water quality, and interdisciplinary conservation work while strengthening her field research skills.	<i>The Army Corp of Engineers is more than engineers . A good chunk of people that work there, are not engineers. This is something I can bring back to my students to educate them on career opportunities that they might not even know about.</i>
FS	USACE Mississippi River Project Office, Rock Island, IL	Andrew Gosse, Davenport CSD	Andy completed his externship with the Forestry Division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, assisting with forest inventory and habitat restoration projects along the Mississippi River. He collected data used to evaluate forest health, improve timber stands, and support habitat for resident and migratory wildlife. Andy also monitored restoration sites to assess the effectiveness of previous projects and gather information for future conservation efforts. His work contributed to long-term ecosystem management while expanding his knowledge of forestry, habitat restoration, and environmental data collection.	<i>Students always ask "When are we ever going to use this?". Having the first-hand experience of actually using what they are learning in the classroom is a great way to get students engaged in the learning.</i>

	Workplace Host	Teacher Extern	Description of Project	Extern Quote
FS	USACE Mississippi River Project Office, Rock Island, IL	Ty Luett, Pleasant Valley CSD	Ty completed his externship with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, working primarily with the Environmental Sustainability Group. He traveled throughout the Upper Mississippi River to monitor forestry projects, observe thinning treatments, and evaluate habitat restoration efforts. Ty also collaborated with hydraulic engineers, natural resource specialists, and water quality experts within the Rock Island District. The experience broadened his understanding of ecosystem management, forestry, and environmental engineering while demonstrating the collaborative approach required to conserve and manage large natural resource systems.	<i>A forester said that his work is the intersection of science and art. In other words, applying the textbook concepts to the real world.</i>
FS	Washington County Conservation, Ainsworth	Erin Almelien, Washington CSD	Erin worked with the naturalists at Marr Park and the Washington County Conservation Board as a creative crafts specialist for summer camps. She strengthened the connection between camp curriculum and hands-on learning by designing engaging crafts and activities that complemented each camp's unique theme. Erin created printable materials, custom decals, and take-home projects, including shirts and keepsakes that encouraged campers to continue exploring nature after camp ended. Her creativity, organization, and attention to detail helped enrich the educational experience while providing meaningful opportunities for students to connect with conservation through hands-on learning.	<i>I think it is great what we as educators can bring in to help the Naturalist! Tech stuff and also knowledge of classroom stuff!</i>
FS	Whiterock Conservancy, Coon Rapids	Shelby Bee, West Des Moines, CSD	Shelby conducted biodiversity research at Whiterock Conservancy by establishing observation sites across restored prairie, wooded areas, and agricultural land. She revisited each marked site throughout the summer, recording observations of plants, animals, and insects and converting those observations into comparative data. Her work examined how different ecosystems supported biodiversity and evaluated the impact of habitat restoration efforts. By analyzing data collected from multiple locations, Shelby gained valuable experience in ecological field research while contributing to ongoing conservation efforts in Iowa.	<i>Having an idea of which organisms are better suited to each environment and how everything requires some sort of balance is what I try to instill in my students. So having folks here understanding that and working very hard to try to maintain or even improve the balance in each area is really a cool thing to be a part of.</i>

Laboratory Science Descriptions

	Workplace Host	Teacher Extern	Description of Project	Extern Quote
LS	Corteva Agriscience, Johnston	Jared Overmann, Waukee CSD	During his externship at Corteva Agriscience, Jared worked in the Soybean Transformation Lab, where he learned the multi-step process used to develop genetically modified soybean plants. He practiced laboratory techniques including pipetting, streaking, plating, and other procedures essential to plant biotechnology research. Throughout the experience, Jared gained a deeper understanding of molecular biology, laboratory protocols, and agricultural biotechnology while learning how scientific innovation contributes to crop improvement and modern agriculture.	<i>My biggest takeaway is how friendly and helpful this team is, everyone is excited to help teach me anything I would like to learn.</i>
LS	Iowa Lakes Community College, Emmetsburg	Malissa Jeffrey, Spencer CSD	During her externship with Iowa Lakes Community College, Malissa worked with the Nursing Department to gain a deeper understanding of healthcare education and workforce preparation. She observed simulation labs using high-fidelity patient mannequins, developed operating procedures for simulation equipment, and participated in nursing orientations. Malissa also gained experience maintaining healthcare technology, including assisting with a Pyxis medication system. The experience strengthened her understanding of healthcare training, clinical education, and the technology used to prepare future nursing professionals.	<i>A large part of nursing is critical thinking to problem solve and help patients when they are in need. Additionally, students must be able to communicate well with each other, patients, and family members of patients. They practice these skills, along with collaboration, during their nursing simulation labs.</i>
LS	Kemin Industries, Des Moines	Matthew Bannerman, Woodward Granger CSD	During his externship at Kemin Industries, Matthew worked with the Specialty Crop Group on solvent extraction and chemical synthesis projects. He applied and expanded his laboratory skills while conducting experiments in extraction and synthesis. Through these projects, Matthew strengthened his understanding of physical organic chemistry and refined laboratory techniques used in research and product development. The experience enhanced both his scientific knowledge and practical skills, providing valuable insights he planned to bring back to his classroom and students.	<i>When I worked at Kemin, we put a lot of effort into making sure we recorded everything' is something that will come up immediately at the start of the year.</i>

	Workplace Host	Teacher Extern	Description of Project	Extern Quote
LS	POET Bioprocessing, Coon Rapids	Abby Steadham, Audubon CSD	During her externship at POET in Coon Rapids, Abby gained hands-on experience analyzing corn starch and ethanol production samples by measuring glucose levels, dry solids, particle size, and other quality indicators. She also evaluated potential improvements to starch testing methods to streamline laboratory procedures while maintaining accurate sample recovery. Throughout the experience, Abby strengthened her skills in laboratory analysis, data collection, and process improvement. She planned to incorporate these real-world applications into her classroom through projects emphasizing data analysis and spreadsheet technology.	<i>Another goal I have for at least one class this year is to build that love for learning, and I think that the externship experience being shared with them could help spark an interest.</i>
LS	University of Iowa Holden Comprehensive Cancer Center, Iowa City	Jacob Lanagan, Iowa City Liberty High School	Jake completed his externship with the Office of Cancer Career Enhancement and Training at the Holden Comprehensive Cancer Center. He developed educational lessons focused on cancer biology and careers in oncology after learning about the cellular and genetic foundations of cancer and interviewing professionals in the field. Jake also expanded existing instructional materials created with the Iowa Cancer Registry. His work produced classroom resources that will be available to biology teachers across Iowa while strengthening his understanding of biomedical science and career education.	<i>The idea behind having scientists as guest speakers is to promote learning, networking, and excitement and interest in a variety of fields in the science umbrella, and to show students that it is not only doctors and nurses that exist as careers related to cancer.</i>
LS	University of Iowa Office of the State Archaeologist, Iowa City	Jessica Hart, Hillcrest Academy	Jess completed her externship with the Office of the State Archaeologist at the University of Iowa, where she modernized the educational "Time Capsule Trunks" used by teachers across the state. She digitized educational materials, updated artifact documentation, wrote new educator background information, and developed curriculum resources that brought Iowa's archaeological history to life. Throughout the project, Jess applied skills in collaboration, research, critical thinking, organization, and documentation. The experience strengthened educational resources while making Iowa history more accessible through engaging, hands-on learning opportunities.	<i>Many of the preconceived notions I had about archaeologists are wrong- archaeology really isn't just finding cool things in the dirt. Research, having a good imagination, and being able to communicate well with others are just as important!</i>

Other Descriptions

	Workplace Host	Teacher Extern	Description of Project	Extern Quote
O	City of McGregor, Iowa	Melissa Haberichter, MFL MarMac CSD	As a STEM Teacher Extern with the City of McGregor, Melissa collaborated with city staff and community partners to learn how local government, economic development, and community engagement initiatives supported a thriving community. She contributed to projects promoting local initiatives, building partnerships, and supporting the Iowa Economic Development Authority's Creative Places Initiative. The experience strengthened her understanding of community leadership and authentic learning while helping her identify new ways to connect schools, businesses, and community organizations through work-based learning opportunities.	<i>I think success really depends on asking good questions, gathering information, building relationships, and figuring out what to do when there isn't an obvious next step.</i>
O	Guttenberg Chamber Commerce	Nicole DeGidio, Clayton Ridge CSD	As a STEM Extern with the Guttenberg Chamber of Commerce, Nicole collaborated with community leaders to support tourism, downtown revitalization, and community engagement. She designed branding materials, created marketing campaigns, developed a new Chamber logo, and produced promotional resources for local businesses and events. Nicole also created the Gather in Guttenberg podcast to highlight businesses, community leaders, and local events. Through these projects, she applied skills in graphic design, digital media, communication, and branding while developing creative solutions that strengthened community connections and increased visibility for local organizations and businesses.	<i>I am really excited to see how my externship shapes my students' learning and hopefully ignites a passion in digital media and journalism.</i>
O	Iowa Heart Foundation	Tim Brickley, Des Moines Central Campus	During his externship with the Iowa Heart Foundation, Tim supported the organization's marketing and outreach efforts through graphic and web design projects. He assisted with website updates, redesigned Heart Healthy Education Kits, and created marketing materials for community outreach. Tim also designed advertisements, signage, and logos for two fundraising events, helping strengthen the Foundation's public presence. His work provided valuable experience in nonprofit communications while supporting health education and fundraising initiatives.	<i>This next year I am going to make it a point of purpose to teach how to help others and why that is important in the work world.</i>

	Workplace Host	Teacher Extern	Description of Project	Extern Quote
	Iowa Library for the Blind and Print Disabled, Des Moines	Abby Brown, Durant CSD	During her externship with the Iowa Library for the Blind and Print Disabled, Abby supported the summer reading program and participated in outreach efforts connecting libraries, schools, and families across Iowa. She collaborated with library staff to learn how literacy programs and educational resources were developed to support learners of all backgrounds. Abby also helped promote library services to educators, increasing awareness of available materials and partnerships. The experience strengthened her understanding of literacy outreach and provided ideas for connecting her own students and fellow educators with valuable library resources.	<i>I understand, and now even more how important collaboration with community is because with community partners and speaker's students can get so much more out of a topic or theme and feel inspired.</i>
O	Iowa PBS	Kathy McGrane, West Des Moines CSD	Kathy completed her externship with Iowa PBS Education as a member of the Iowa Science Phenomena Team. She researched, developed, and prepared Iowa-based science phenomena aligned with the Iowa Science Standards for publication on the Iowa PBS website. Drawing on her experience as a science teacher, Kathy helped create engaging classroom resources that encourage inquiry-based learning through real-world examples. The experience strengthened her curriculum development skills while expanding access to high-quality science instructional resources for educators across Iowa.	<i>When we mention the real-world connections that we have made with our externship experience, it fills in the gaps between academic standards, allowing students to make sense of what they are learning.</i>