25 26 IOWA STEM ANNUAL REPORT | NOV. 2026



Iowa STEM Teacher Externships Program
Emma Bopp, Evan Haan and Greg Smith
Clinton County Conservation



STEM Scale-Up Program
Harlan Community School District



STEM BEST® Program
College Community School District

TOMORROW STEMS FROM IOWA

GOVERNOR'S STEM ADVISORY COUNCIL

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Indicators in this report are provided by the University of Northern Iowa Center for Social and Behavioral Research with contributions from Iowa State University Research Institute for Studies in Education and Iowa Testing Programs at The University of Iowa.

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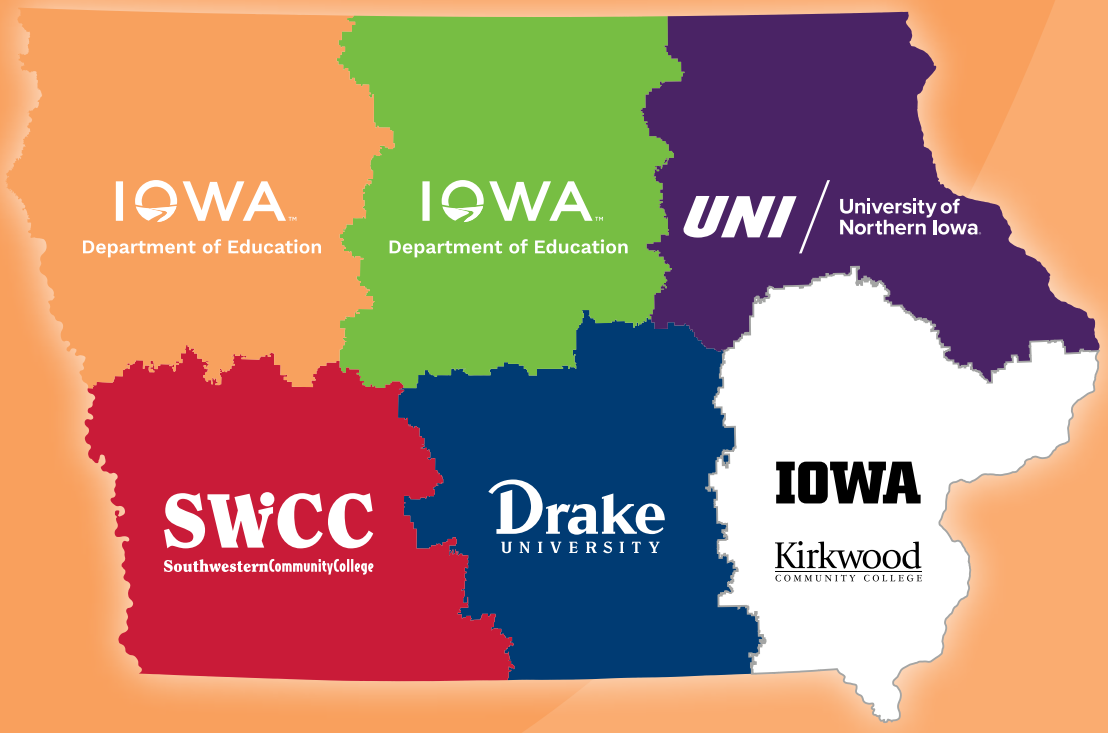
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Gov. Reynolds signed
EXECUTIVE ORDER

14

to enhance and expand STEM education in Iowa.



Iowa's Regional STEM Managers maintained more than

1,537

CONNECTIONS with businesses, workforce development, economic development and education leaders.



OVER

40

interactive and informative breakout sessions at the **IOWA STEM SUMMIT.**

42

PROGRAMS/EVENTS have earned the STEM Council's Seal of Approval between 2015-26.



OVER

125

exhibitor partners engaged in meaningful conversation to advance STEM education in Iowa through **STEM DAY AT THE CAPITOL.**

58

RAPIL SCHOLARSHIPS AMOUNTING TO $188,000 were awarded in 2025-26 to STEM professionals intending to become classroom teachers.



THOUSANDS of Iowa State Fairgoers engaged with volunteer partners at

17

INTERACTIVE BOOTHS during STEM Day at the Fair.

449

EDUCATORS, BUSINESS PARTNERS AND STEM ADVOCATES collaborated at the Iowa STEM Summit.



Iowa's Regional STEM Managers hosted

19

COMMUNITY STEM FESTIVALS across Iowa, engaging an estimated 10,256 Iowans in 2025-26.

72

TEACHERS have received the Iowa STEM Teacher Award between 2015-26.



CORPORATE PARTNERS AND INVESTMENTS

Over

$1.5 million

in gifts and cost-sharing invested in Iowa STEM.

43

corporate partners invested more than **$450,000** in support of Iowa STEM programming and events.

More than

$1 million

contributed to Iowa STEM programming and events by cost-sharing partners*.

COMMUNICATIONS

Over

300

placements in statewide and national newspaper, television, radio outlets and online news, appearing before potentially **642 million** eyes.

55%

Iowa-based media outlets.

40%

included an Iowa event/ program example or story.

3,787 newsletter subscribers

2,768 Facebook followers

1,268 LinkedIn followers

Collectively, Iowa's Regional STEM managers have **17,120** newsletter subscribers and a social media audience of nearly **8,400**.

educate.iowa.gov/STEM

79,777 website page views

Active website users: **38,600**

Scan to learn more about Iowa STEM and the Governor's STEM Advisory Council

*Includes regional STEM hub institutions, STEM Teacher Externships Program workplace hosts, STEM BEST® Program partners and Strategic America.

STEM SCALE-UP PROGRAM

The STEM Scale-Up Program provides high-quality STEM education programs to PK-12 youth in school and out of school along with training for educators to implement effectively.

educate.iowa.gov/STEM/ScaleUp

Iowa's Regional STEM Managers continue to drive STEM excellence statewide, preparing the next generation of innovators and strengthening Iowa's future workforce. In 2025-26, they collectively facilitated 13 STEM Scale-Up Program offerings, impacting thousands of Iowans.

Over

1,100

educators delivered at least one STEM Scale-Up Program offering in 2025-26.

An estimated

90,000

PK-12 youth participated in at least one STEM Scale-Up Program offering in 2025-26.

More than

1.35 million

PK-12 Iowans have participated in STEM Scale-Up Programming since 2012.

Educators who participated in the STEM Scale-Up Program agreed or strongly agreed their participation helped gain skills and confidence:

89%

knowledge of STEM topics

88%

teaching STEM topics

86%

preparing students for STEM careers

On average in the past five years, **a higher percentage of students among all gender and race subgroups who participated in the STEM Scale-Up Program performed better** on statewide tests than students who did not receive STEM Scale-Up Programming.

Year over year, a higher percentage of **STEM Scale-Up Program student participants meet or exceed proficiency benchmarks** on the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP) compared to all students statewide.

Mathematics

2021-25

+4.6

percentage points, on average

2024-25

79%

compared to 70% of all Iowa students

Science

2021-25

+3.6

percentage points, on average

2024-25

75%

compared to 66% of all Iowa students

Educators participating in the Scale-Up Program indicated impact on curriculum and instructional practices based on the following categories:

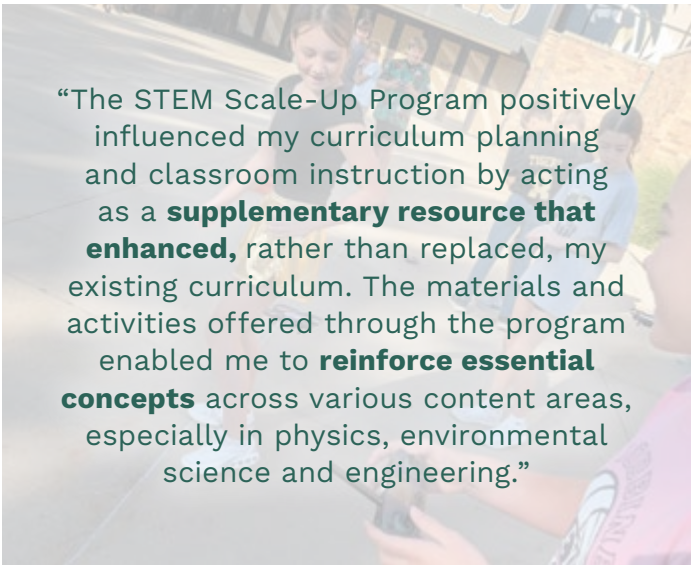
- Integration of STEM into Instruction
- Enhancement of Student Skills
- Expansion of STEM Access and Engagement
- Extension of Learning Opportunities and Exploration

79%

reported increased student interest in **STEM topics.**

74%

reported increased student **awareness of STEM.**



"The STEM Scale-Up Program positively influenced my curriculum planning and classroom instruction by acting as a **supplementary resource that enhanced,** rather than replaced, my existing curriculum. The materials and activities offered through the program enabled me to **reinforce essential concepts** across various content areas, especially in physics, environmental science and engineering."

"It was amazing to be able to **offer STEM opportunities to homeschool students that do not have the access** to these materials at home and pique their interest and curiosity! The **training also increases my confidence** to share this with our rural community and diverse and gifted learners."

STEM BEST PROGRAM

The STEM BEST® Program supports partnerships between schools and businesses to provide career-linked learning experiences for students.

educate.iowa.gov/STEM/BEST

29

new and expanding STEM BEST® models were engaged in 2025–26, involving 28 school districts, 93 educators and 153 community partners.

An additional

6,083

students participated in new and expanding STEM BEST® models in 2025-26.

A total of

161

STEM BEST® models have been established between 2014-26.

STEM BEST® PARTNERSHIPS

153

community partners collaborated with STEM BEST® Program models in 2025-26.

- **92** Business and Industry
- **19** Government
- **10** Higher Education
- **24** Non-Profit
- **8** Economic Development

An estimated collective cost-share of **$719,250** contributed in 2025-26 exceeded expectations and stretched the state's appropriation of **$955,500.**

DURANT COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT strengthened standards-aligned STEM instruction and expanded hands-on, career-connected learning with their STEM BEST® award. Funding modernized science labs, supported curriculum alignment, professional development and expanded higher education and industry partnerships, including a hands-on metalcasting mini-foundry program. These efforts increased work-based learning, strengthened career readiness and improved secondary science proficiency.



"Investing in this program allows us to foster creativity, problem-solving and career readiness in ways that make education more relevant and impactful."

Alex Davis
STEM BEST® educator partner
Gilbert Community School District



83%

of Iowa's counties have a STEM BEST® Program model.

= STEM BEST® model

126 STEM BEST® models are serving **rural** Iowa school districts

37 STEM BEST® models are serving **urban** Iowa school districts

STEM BEST® EXPLORE

STEM BEST® Explore extends career-connected learning opportunities for students into the summer for existing models. It helps reach students who may not be available for these work-based learning opportunities within the traditional school year.

15

schools participated in STEM BEST® Explore during its pilot season.

40

educators participated in STEM BEST® Explore during its pilot season.

An estimated

430

students were impacted by STEM BEST® Explore experiences in summer 2025.



"These experiences will shape their future career paths, enhance our STEM BEST model and create lasting partnerships that continue to benefit our students and community."

Malayne Meyer
STEM BEST® educator partner
Osage Community School District

STORM LAKE COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT leveraged the summer to move students from learning about careers to actively practicing them. Across education, theatre and sports experiences, students took on real responsibilities, worked with younger peers and community members and learned to navigate the expectations of a workplace. The pilot also helped the district identify possibilities to expand work-based learning and additional community partnerships.

IOWA STEM TEACHER EXTERNSHIPS PROGRAM

The Iowa STEM Teacher Externships Program connects classrooms to careers through the immersion of STEM educators engaged in workplace settings for six weeks in the summer.

educate.iowa.gov/STEM/Externships

1,024

STEM Teacher Externship experiences from 2009-25.

289

unique Workplace Partners from 2009-25.

53% of STEM Teacher Externs serve **rural** Iowa school districts.

47% of STEM Teacher Externs serve **urban** Iowa school districts.

$153,700

in approximate cost share by workplace hosts in 2025, **$1,625,600** since 2009.

91%

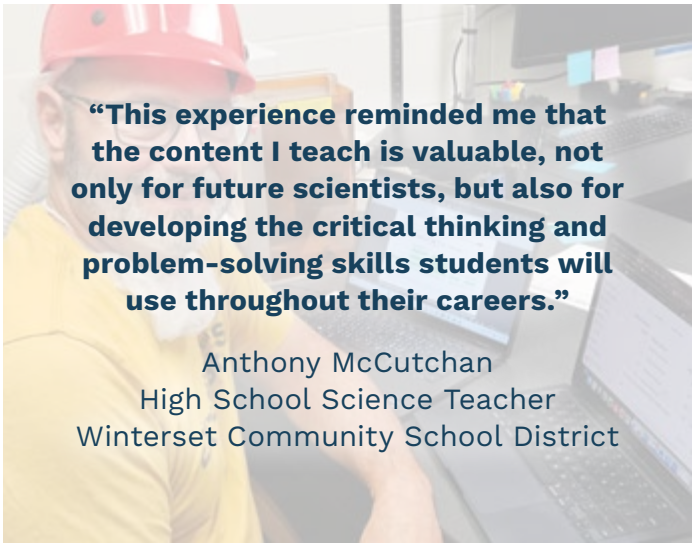
of 2025 workplace hosts valued completed STEM Teacher Extern projects between **$2,501-$10,000.**

9,200

estimated students impacted by Iowa STEM Teacher Externship experiences connected back to the classroom in 2025-26.

"Having the opportunity to share what's happening in our business today, while also providing insight into the skills and knowledge that would benefit local students, can help bridge the gap between education and the workplace. These students may eventually become our employees, and by building those connections early, we can encourage them to pursue careers and build their futures right here in our community."

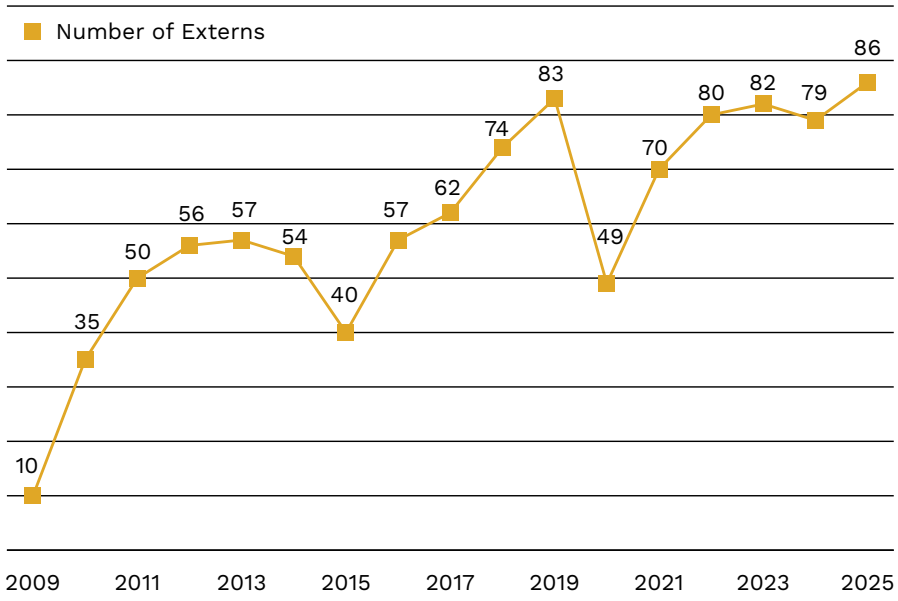
Ricca Watt
Art's Way Manufacturing



"This experience reminded me that the content I teach is valuable, not only for future scientists, but also for developing the critical thinking and problem-solving skills students will use throughout their careers."

Anthony McCutchan
High School Science Teacher
Winterset Community School District

ANNUAL PARTICIPATION IN EXTERNSHIPS



2025 Placements by Sector

49%	Field Sciences
31%	Engineering/ Manufacturing
13%	Technology/ Mathematical Modeling
3.5%	Laboratory Sciences
3.5%	Other

2025 STEM Teacher Externs indicated more confidence with the following aspects of teaching:

Knowledge about the application of their subject(s) in the workplace: **95%**

Ability to advise students about job opportunities in their subject area(s): **95%**

Mastery of subject-area content: **90%**

Ability to prepare students for the expectations they will encounter in the workplace: **88%**

Ability to use problem or project-based instruction: **83%**