North Carolina’s strength in STEM continues to advance, thanks in no small part to the work of dedicated educators backed by visionary corporate partners. This month, I want to highlight three great examples of North Carolina’s commitment to STEM leadership.

(1) The North Carolina Science Festival: On April 10, this year’s North Carolina Science Festival opened its annual two-week run. Founded in 2010 by UNC-Chapel Hill’s Morehead Planetarium and Science Center, the Festival is now a 700-event, 500-mile wide science and technology showcase. Festival events celebrate the cultural, educational, and financial benefits that science, technology, engineering, and mathematics provide to North Carolina. The Festival inspires children to pursue science-related careers and businesses to invest in North Carolina. Biogen Foundation is the presenting sponsor.

Featured Educators

This month’s Featured Educators are the six recipients of the 2015 Burroughs Wellcome Fund Career Award for Sci & Math Teachers.

Featured STEM Engagement Tool

Learn more about the NC STEM Scorecard and the NC STEM Center.

Featured Video

Click here to see how the NC Museum of Natural Sciences is investing in teachers across our state.
The Festival’s signature event, the UNC Science Expo, held Saturday, April 11, on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus, offered more than 100 activities for all ages including a chemistry magic show, 3D printing exhibits, robotics, featuring Baxter the robot, and virtual reality experiences.

The Burroughs Wellcome Fund, a Festival platinum sponsor, recently announced a $1 million endowment gift in support of the Festival. The gift will allow Morehead Planetarium to make long-term, strategic investments to strengthen the festival, which has grown dramatically in just five years. In 2014, the Festival drew some 330,000 North Carolinians to events in 95 counties.

(2) $1 Million Gift to NCSSM: Extending their extraordinary support for STEM education, the Burroughs Wellcome Fund also, earlier this month, announced a $1 million gift to the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics. “I truly believe that North Carolina’s future successes lie in the ability to engage all students with quality science programming and instruction.” explains Alfred Mays, Burroughs Wellcome Fund Program Officer for Science Education and Diversity. “The Fund’s mission supports the framework for that outcome.”
NC School of Science & Math celebrates receipt of $1 million gift from the Burroughs Wellcome Fund.

(3) $1 Million for STEMAccelerator: North Carolina New Schools, backed by a $1 million gift from the GlaxoSmithKline Foundation, will soon launch STEMAccelerator, an initiative to support teachers’ professional growth in the critical areas of science and mathematics. By enhancing the skills of STEM teachers, the initiative aims to address the gap in educational resources and workplace needs by boosting the number of students pursuing STEM careers. A report last year projected that although some 240,000 STEM-related jobs would be available in the state by 2018, North Carolina is not producing enough STEM graduates to meet employer demand. This is true even as a recent job growth study ranked North Carolina’s capital area No. 1 (of the largest 52 U.S. metropolitan areas) in STEM employment gains from 2004-2014.

Want to keep up with what North Carolina is doing to promote STEM education? Check out the NC STEM Center, a great online STEM hub.

Next Month...

Don’t forget, May 5th is National Teacher Appreciation Day! The Kenan Fellows Institute is celebrating by announcing the 2015-16 Kenan Fellows and by facilitating a Teacher Appreciation Week Challenge. Pledge your support by using #ThankaTeacher, the official hashtag for National Teacher Appreciation Week.
Do you know a teacher who is working hard to help students succeed? Let us know, and s/he could be featured in the next education issue!