Introducing STEM WEST: Project-Based Learning in Action!

The newly established STEM West represents the intersection of two of IEI's top Emerging Issues Forum priorities: the Community Action Plans (CAP) from the Teachers and the Great Economic Debate Forum of 2014, and the strategies of this year's Forum on FutureWork. Housed at the Western Piedmont Council of Governments and supporting seven school systems, STEM West’s mission is to “advocate and support the alignment of education and occupational objectives through the regional workforce and community partnerships.”

STEM West’s sponsors include Duke Energy, Biogen Foundation, Burroughs Wellcome Fund, the NC Science, Mathematics, and Technology Education Center—and includes the initial seed funding from the Institute for Emerging Issues’ Community Action Planning grants. Community support will be key for this new initiative, and with more than 40 education, business, government, and community partners attending last week’s spring meeting, it is clear STEM West is destined for success.

Featured Virtual Engagement Activities:

Register for one or more of our upcoming sector-focused virtual engagement activities designed to explore opportunities to expand project-based learning (PBL).

Featured Program:
Kenan Fellows

Kenan Fellows deliver content through PBL, providing educators with relevant, real-world professional learning.

Feature Event: NC Science Festival

Learn more about the many events showcasing science and technology across our state as part of the 2016
Dr. Carol Moore, director of STEM West, brings 30+ years of experience in science and math education. Working closely with the STEM West Advisory Board, sponsors, and community partners, Dr. Moore is launching the Filling the Gap project this spring. Designed after the Catawba County CAP, this project pairs twenty 9th and 10th grade science/math/career-technical education (CTE) teachers with a local STEM business to create a real-world, project-based learning (PBL) unit.

“Similar to the CAP, the Filling the Gap project adds an additional element of linking a problem and project to a local STEM business,” said Dr. Moore. “Our business partners are engaged in professional development with teachers and are the link to making the unit real and engaging. These types of efforts are building and increasing partnerships between our schools and local STEM businesses in our community.”

Attendees of the 2016 FutureWork Forum agreed that “project-based learning’s time has come.” According to the Buck Institute, “this delivery method has been confirmed as an effective and enjoyable way to learn and develop deeper learning competencies required for success in college, career, and civic life.”

“PBL, done effectively, can address many of the challenges teachers and the business community have raised,” said Dr. Moore. “This pedagogy increases student engagement because the problems, projects, and issues are real and important. Students work collaboratively, using technological and local resources to solve problems or create projects to reveal their learning.”
Later this month, IEI will host separate virtual engagement activities focused on the future of project- and work-based learning in five sectors: Banking & Finance, Education Technology, Energy, Healthcare, and Government/Smart Communities. These collaborations build upon our “Leadership Hackathon” sessions during Day 2 of our recent FutureWork Forum.

Join me (@Education_IEI) for a live Twitter Chat on Tuesday, April 26th at 8:00 PM, and follow #IEIFutureWork and #NCed as we look at ways Education Tech can support Project-Based Learning. Additionally, we’ll explore how PBL can be used to develop the entrepreneurial skills required for success in the field of Education Technology.

Best,

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