GOVERNOR'S STEM ADVISORY COUNCIL RELEASES YEAR 1 ASSESSMENT REPORT

Written by Office of the Governor of the State of Iowa Friday, 16 August 2013 10:03

(DES MOINES) – Executive Order Number 81 signed by Iowa Governor Terry E. Branstad on May 15, 2013, declared that science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education should be strengthened as part of providing a world-class education, encouraging innovation and enhancing economic development in Iowa. The Advisory Council's top priorities are to increase student interest and achievement in STEM in order to be well prepared for post-secondary study and the rewarding STEM careers that await them here in Iowa.

Wrapping up the first implementation year of Council programming, outcomes and indicators suggest a strong start, with plenty of work yet to do. Assessment of STEM Council programs is a collaborative effort of evaluation centers at lowa's three public universities – the Center for Social and Behavioral Research (CSBR) at the University of Northern Iowa, the Research Institute for Studies in Education (RISE) at Iowa State University, and Iowa Testing Program (ITP) at the University of Iowa. The collaborative issued their first year report Iowa STEM Monitoring Project 2012-2013 Summary Report at the biannual meeting of the Governor's STEM Advisory Council on August 15, 2013. The report is publicly available at www.lowaSTEM.gov

Major findings of the first-year assessment provide plenty to build upon. For example:

- All twelve of the 2012-13 exemplary programs scaled up across lowa through the new STEM Network were found to increase student interest (89 percent of students reported more interest in at least one STEM subject after having participated).
- A steady decline is observed in the interest of lowa youth in general when it comes to STEM topics and STEM careers, from elementary to middle school to high school.
- Ninety-four percent of surveyed lowans believe that science and technology are making our lives better.
- The Iowa Assessment mathematics and science scores of participants in STEM Council programs were considerably stronger than the scores of young Iowans in general (an encouraging association though evaluators point out insufficient information to conclude causation).

The Council's co-chair, Lieutenant Governor Kim Reynolds greeted the findings with cautious optimism, "The fine work of the assessment team boosts the morale of the hundreds of professionals across the State who are working hard to implement the Council's vision," she said, "while at the same time we're reminded of the haves and have nots in lowa when it comes to STEM who we owe our very best effort moving forward."

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A disparity was revealed among parents when it comes to beliefs that their children are "very well prepared" in STEM subjects at school – 37 percent of rural versus 62 percent of urban parents felt so. One of the key considerations in rolling out exemplary STEM programs last year to almost 900 lowa educators and 38,000 learners was to target regions of the state with the highest need.

Council co-chair Mary Andringa, President and CEO of Vermeer Corporation, sees great value in the assessment document. "STEM is a national imperative in this era of globally competitive markets, and lowa is really well-positioned to lead by example," she said. "Data-driven decision making informed by objective measures will keep us on the front edge."

The 2012-13 Iowa STEM Monitoring Project Summary Report is available at http://www.iowast em.gov/sites/default/files/stem monitoring report final8-13-13.pdf

STEM programming for FY2014 is already well underway with nine competitively selected exemplary programs being supported in some 3,800 clubs and classrooms reaching almost 100,000 lowa youth through the Council's Network. To learn more about STEM education in lowa contact the Governor's STEM Advisory Council Administration Office or visit www.lowaSTEM.gov.

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About the Governor's STEM Advisory Council: Formed in 2011, the Council is a 40-member, public-private partnership dedicated to building a strong STEM education foundation for all lowans. For more information, go to www.lowaSTEM.gov.