

The Resilient Reader

Resilient Region Stories



Education and Workforce Development

October 2015



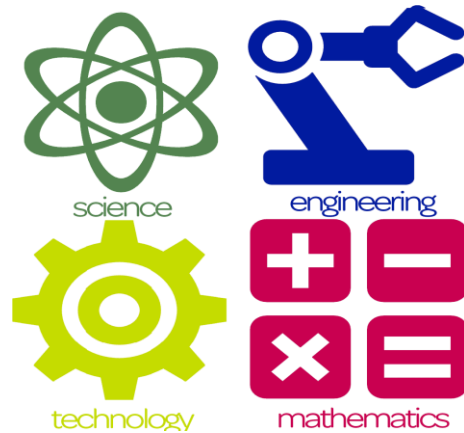
Career Exploration Initiative - Opportunities for Students to Select STEM Careers with Hands-on Learning

WHO: Champions of the Resilient Region Education and Workforce Development theme are:
Dr. Larry Lundblad (President) Central Lakes College - CLC
Craig Nathan (Regional Director) Rural MN Concentrated Employment Program – CEP
Dr. Chad Coquette (Executive Director, CEO) National Joint Powers Alliance - NJPA
Monty Johnson (Senior Dean) MN State Community and Technical College – MState
Cheryl Hills (Executive Director) Region Five Development Commission – R5DC

WHAT: In the Education and Workforce Development theme area, Champion Chad Coquette, along with Connectivity Champion Paul Drange, Director of Regional Programs for NJPA, both have been a part of the Career Exploration Initiative (CEI), which is now called Technology Mobile. NJPA, Central Lakes College and M-State Wadena have collaborated efforts to promote the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Career Exploration Program. *STEM Career Exploration/Technology Mobile is designed to allow student to explore career options and create direct bulls-eye link to careers in this region with hands-on learning.*

The program is designed to rotate career and technological equipment, curriculum and supplies among area schools. The curriculum is aligned with the Minnesota Department of Education standards, is hands-on and is designed to introduce, engage and get students excited about different career opportunities throughout Region 5. The equipment stays in the classroom for varying times depending on the grade level using the equipment. In K-4th grade the equipment is only in the classroom for 1-2 weeks whereas 5th – 8th grade receive the equipment for 4 weeks and 9th – 12th grade up to 6 weeks. The equipment and program are not meant to replace their original curriculum, only enhance it by giving a short glimpse of other opportunities for the students.

Alicia Green at Central Lakes College has been working to expand STEM across the region since fall of 2013. Exposing students to careers options through the CEI/Technology Mobile will improve student success and thus develop a qualified workforce.



HOW/WHEN: The STEM Career Exploration/Technology Mobile is directly tied to school districts within the region. This year is a pilot year with three schools going through the program namely Browerville, Menahga and Pine River-Backus. Because this is the pilot year with this project, the administration has given the teachers the choice if they wanted to be involved. On average, each school has approximately 25 teachers signed up with on average 22 students in their classes; approximated student reach this year: 1,650 students using the technology. Next year it will be opened it up to allow other schools the opportunity to utilize the equipment.

This initiative is easily replicated anywhere in the state &/or nation. Since additional funding was recently provided by NJPA for STEM Career Exploration, other service cooperative entities have replicated the initiative. These groups have sought support from the MN Legislature asking for special funding to run regional pilots across the state.

WHY: These types of programs allow students to see other educational paths besides a Bachelor's degree in order to have a successful career. There are so many careers for students that are in high demand with high paying wages available to students in this region and the STEM Career Exploration program brings an awareness that these jobs exist and guides students on the path to get there. This region needs students to fill those career gaps, stay in this community and add to the overall economic development within this region.

WHERE: Along with the relationships of Saint Cloud State University and the North Dakota State College of Science, there is talk about creating collaborations with Bemidji State University for STEM educational offerings to those students who do choose STEM pathways.

Links for Education and Workforce Development:

National Joint Powers Alliance – NJPA <http://www.njpacoop.org/about-us>

- 1) *Agriculture Instructor shared by multi-school districts.* Supported by NJPA. New regional positions are being considered by NJPA that add value to local units of government and school districts.
- 2) *NJPA Education Solutions offers* School districts and educational entities are now able to access a growing venue of educational services in professional development for teacher leaders and administration educational opportunities. - See more at: <http://www.njpacoop.org/statewide-regional-solutions/education-solutions/about-us/#sthash.RID91E6K.dpuf>

- 3) *NJPA hosts annual Career and College Readiness Summit.*
- 4) *CEO program.* Program supports entrepreneurial development of high school students and has been funded by Initiative Foundation and NJPA.

Rural MN Concentrated Employment Program – Rural MN CEP <http://www.rmcep.com/rmcep>

- 5) *Rural MN CEP Career Advisor Program.* Added value to the STEM Career Pathways but different as it provides Career advising to students at all regional high schools. Program funded by NJPA.
- 6) *Rural MN CEP delivers Ramp-up to Readiness Coordination.*

Central Lakes College – CLC <http://www.clcmn.edu>

- 7) *CLC in partnership with Bridges Academies delivers additional career exploration.*
- 8) *CLC Advanced Manufacturing Education Alliance certifies over 300 students for manufacturing jobs.*
- 9) *CLC RITA grant trains hundreds in IT jobs.*
- 10) *CLC Center for Excellence in Agriculture “Ag Centric” delivers new Ag programs.*

Minnesota State Technical & Community College - MState <http://www.minnesota.edu>

- 11) *MState receives grant to provide three mobile training labs: Safety, Blueprint Reading and Precision Measurement and CDL training.*
- 12) *MState provides career pathway training in advanced manufacturing fields of mechatronics, machining and welding.*