



Declaration of **INTER**dependence

Addressing STEM Talent in Florida



Florida's increasingly knowledge-based economy is driven by innovation – the foundation of which lies in a dynamic and well-educated workforce equipped with science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) skills. Florida, like much of the rest of the United States, is failing to develop an adequate supply of workers with the STEM skill sets needed across a range of industries and emerging segments of the innovation economy. For Florida to not only recover and sustain its economy, but to also be a competitor in world markets, it is imperative that connectivity between and integration of business, education and other stakeholders be increased.

It is necessary that all stakeholders work cooperatively and collaboratively in a business-led initiative to develop a systemic approach that will result in greater efficiency and effectiveness in STEM talent development. These efforts will align preK-20 STEM education programs, activities and research to workforce expectations, create an organizational environment such that all STEM initiatives in Florida successfully connect, align and cooperate to achieve the common goal of improving student

achievement in the STEM areas, and establish a sound management foundation necessary to ensure sustainability of a Florida STEM Council, which will be created through stakeholder efforts.

The purpose of this Declaration of Interdependence is to confirm the support for and planned participation in a unified, statewide effort to promote STEM talent development among the targeted industry sector employers, education and training institutions, economic development organizations and other relevant entities. We pledge our efforts to ensure Florida is equipped with the workforce development systems required to generate the needed quantity and quality of workers with the STEM skills to advance the state's knowledge-based economy. While some responsibilities are rightly shared by all stakeholders, such as identifying and overcoming obstacles to effective STEM talent development including securing sustainable funding, addressing regulatory barriers, recruiting adequate numbers of STEM students, leveraging available resources and the like, we recognize that individual stakeholder groups also have independent responsibilities. The following key principles will guide our activities.

We believe the role of business/industry in addressing STEM talent development includes:

- Identifying, quantifying and communicating the short term and long term specific workforce skills, competencies, certifications and degrees needed.
- Working with education in the planning, development, oversight and refining of STEM education programs. Serving on education advisory councils.
- Assisting in student/trainee recruitment and placement.
- Providing STEM education enrichment opportunities including student internships, teacher externships, apprenticeships and fellowships.
- Providing financial incentives such as scholarships, tuition reimbursement, and work/study programs in STEM education programs to encourage enrollment.
- Seeking out and participating in activities which encourage and inform students about STEM careers.

We believe the role of education in addressing STEM talent development includes:

- Developing and implementing STEM training and degree programs to specifically meet the workforce talent demands as expressed by business/industry.
- Promoting STEM education/training programs to generate the number of graduates successfully trained in the areas required by industry.
- Promoting STEM student internship and providing student research opportunities.
- Providing STEM faculty with teacher externship opportunities, providing them with firsthand awareness of career applications of STEM academics.
- Achieving measureable outcomes that have been mutually identified with business/industry.

We believe the role of economic development, workforce development, target industry associations and other public stakeholders in addressing STEM talent development includes:

- Facilitating ongoing discussion among industry and other stakeholders, to ensure long-term STEM talent development success.
- Expanding high-value, STEM-related positions in Florida, providing meaningful employment opportunities for students pursuing STEM disciplines.
- Identifying and educating stakeholders in the relevant stem industry certifications and ensuring certifications earned by students at the local level correspond to the economy's needs.
- Creating STEM occupational awareness with job seekers.
- Supporting student scholarships to STEM programs with creative approaches.
- Monitoring industry, education and economic environments, ensuring a forward thinking, strategic and proactive focus.

Name

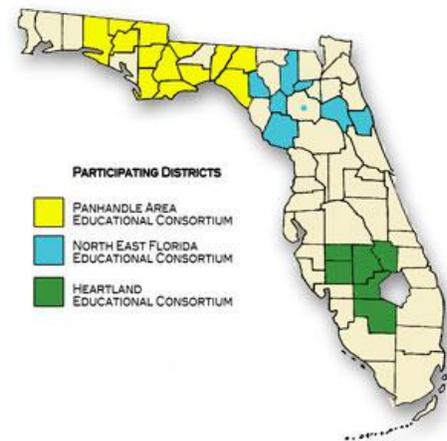
Organization

Please return to: Panhandle Area Educational Consortium, 753 West Boulevard, Chipley, FL 32428
or email to crouchb@paec.org

FloridaLearns STEM Scholars Project Overview

The *FloridaLearns STEM Scholars* initiative is a multi-faceted, three-year project funded in 2011 by the Florida Department of Education to the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC) and its partners, the Heartland Educational Consortium (HEC) and the North East Florida Educational Consortium (NEFEC). The purpose of the \$4.5 million award to Florida's three regional educational service organizations, located in the state's three Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern (RACEC), is to create and implement a model STEM high school system for gifted and talented students in 27 of Florida's small and rural school districts.

Florida's three regional educational consortia embarked on this joint venture to ensure the state's most underserved students, the gifted and talented students in grades 9 – 12, who reside in PAEC, HEC, and NEFEC school districts, receive individualized services that engage them in an appropriate, rigorous STEM curriculum. Small and rural school district high school students participating in *FLSS* are those identified by their school districts as gifted and talented. The participating districts in Northwest Florida include Walton, Holmes, Washington, Jackson, Gadsden, Calhoun, Liberty, Gulf, Franklin, Wakulla, Taylor, Jefferson, and Madison counties. The Heartland participating school districts include DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands and Okeechobee. Participating districts in Northeast Florida are Columbia, Flagler, Gilchrist, Lafayette, Levy, P. K. Yongue, Putnam, and Union.



Through the *FloridaLearns STEM Scholars* Project, students will have opportunities to develop the STEM skill sets needed across a range of businesses, industries and emerging segments of the innovation economy to become an integral part of the highly skilled and educated STEM-proficient workforce for Florida's economic future. The initiative will enable these gifted and talented students to make informed career choices and create a framework to increase the likelihood of their success in post-secondary STEM curricula or the workplace. Working with regional STEM stakeholders as partners, the three consortia are leading an educational transformation to provide increased access to STEM-related courses and rigorous and challenging learning experiences for these gifted and talented students.

FloridaLearns STEM Scholars (FLSS), also known as Florida's Rural STEM Initiative, involves economic development, workforce development, target industry associations, K-12 education, STEM-related higher education faculty, military, business, industry, philanthropic organizations and other public stakeholders. Using the research and strategies found in the recently released *Florida STEM Strategic Plan*, the program represents current best practices for establishing a highly successful collaborative effort. Together, these STEM stakeholders join *STEMflorida*, Inc.'s unified, statewide initiative to promote STEM talent development for the advancement of the state's knowledge-based economy.