

## STEM Scholars Summer Field Site Experience Florida Caverns State Park

### Participating School Districts



#### Panhandle Area Educational Consortium

Patrick L. McDaniel, Executive Director

Calhoun  
Franklin  
Gadsden  
Gulf  
Holmes  
Jackson  
Jefferson  
Liberty  
Madison  
Taylor  
Wakulla  
Walton  
Washington



#### Heartland Educational Consortium

Dr. Debra Elliott, Executive Director

DeSoto  
Glades  
Hardee  
Hendry  
Highlands  
Okeechobee



#### North East Florida Educational Consortium

James Surrency, Ph.D., Executive Director

Columbia  
Flagler  
Gilchrist  
Lafayette  
Levy  
P.K. Yonge  
Putnam  
Union

Summer STEM Field Site/Workplace Experiences, across the districts served by the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium, have allowed STEM Scholars to learn about STEM-related careers in their communities through personal experiences with STEM Talent Development Partners. This has been a valuable experience for participants and has contributed to their development which will help them to meet the demands of Florida's future economy.

Through the *FloridaLearns STEM Scholars* Project's Talent Development Program, high school juniors and seniors from small districts across Florida participated in eight-day Field Site/Workplace Experiences this summer. These experiences are made possible through partnerships with leaders in STEM industries such as local businesses, agencies, the military, and higher education faculty. The experiences offered by these STEM Talent Developers are preparing STEM Scholars to become STEM-ready by demonstrating the value of real world interactions with STEM.

STEM Scholars from Marianna High School took part in an 8-day experience at Florida Caverns State Park, led by Park Service Specialist, Kelly Banta and Marianna High School teacher, Kathy McCrary. There they used solutions of hydrogen peroxide to remove mold and algae from formations throughout the caves to restore them to their pristine state. Valuable insight into potential career choices and the post-secondary preparation they require, as well as the intrinsic benefits of service learning were important outcomes for each participant. Additionally, students gained a greater appreciation for an important natural resource in their local community and the work required to maintain it so that visitors may continue to benefit educationally and aesthetically.



Surrounded by formations within the caves are (L-R) Angela Smith, Erica Pereda, Kathy McCrary (teacher) and Morgan Laramore.