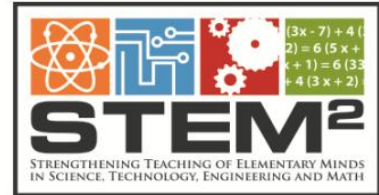


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The Future of High Tech Work Force is Seven Years Old

Unique partnership of educators, policy makers, industry says high-quality STEM education in elementary grades today is essential to growing tomorrow's skilled workforce

Wenham, MA—Producing enough skilled workers to meet the needs of Massachusetts' innovation economy starts with hands-on science in the elementary schools. That's the message of an unusual partnership gathering at Gordon College this week. Called STEM Squared, the partnership brings together science teachers, administrators, policy makers and industry leaders behind a shared vision: a commitment to quality science instruction in the earliest grades.

"By the time students get to middle school it's really too late," says Scott Morrisson, the director of curriculum instruction for the Manchester-Essex schools and a leader of STEM Squared. "We need to make sure that our students are being introduced to STEM much earlier and in a way that really builds on their natural sense of curiosity about how the world works."

"With the Massachusetts high-tech sector becoming an increasingly important part of the state's economy, the need to excite educators about industries like ours that rely on a strong STEM skillset is absolutely critical in order to inspire the next generation of scientists and engineers," says Tom Faulkner, Senior Director of Operations for the Varian Semiconductor Equipment group at Applied Materials, Inc.

Applied Materials is a leading semiconductor equipment provider and one of four companies participating in STEM Squared. Others include Danvers medical implant maker Abiomed, Peabody ultrasound specialists Analogic and Axcelis Technologies, a Beverly company that manufactures semiconductor processing equipment. Science teachers will be touring the facilities and talking to company leaders and employees to get a first-hand look at the skills that are needed to power high-tech industry.

The science teachers who are part of STEM Squared represent a diverse group of school districts, from Manchester Essex to Lynn, home to the state's first urban K-8 STEM district. But future teachers are also involved. Gordon College recently retooled its teacher preparation program so that teachers-in-training are ready to teach hands-on science from the very first day of their new careers.

Francis Vigeant, the CEO of KnowAtom, a Salem science education start-up, says that while STEM Squared brings together lots of different perspectives, all of the participants share the same goal. "We want students who are engaged and learning the STEM skills they're going to need to thrive in an increasingly high-skilled world. By working together we can meet not just the challenge of state and federal standards but the needs of industry."

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