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**Grants Support Network of Energy & Sustainability Schools**  
*Area Companies Invest in STEM Education to Support Future Workforce*

RALEIGH – Secondary education focused on the theme of energy and sustainability is getting a significant boost from Progress Energy through a challenge grant to the North Carolina New Schools Project (NCNSP). This year’s challenge to support science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education was met by gifts from Duke Energy, ABB Inc. and North Carolina’s Electric Cooperatives with donations totaling \$165,000.

This year represents the second of a three-year challenge grant from Progress Energy. Under the terms of the grant, NCNSP raises \$100,000 each year from other donors to qualify for a \$50,000 annual match from Progress Energy. These funds support an NCNSP-affiliated network of STEM secondary schools with a thematic focus on energy and sustainability. The network includes Avery County High School STEM Academy, Charlotte STEM High School (in planning), Edgecombe Early College High School, Durham’s Southern School of Engineering, Tri-County Early College High School in Cherokee County and Wake NC State University STEM Early College High School.

“The new energy economy demands skills that were not attainable, or even known, a generation ago,” said Jeff Corbett, senior vice president of Progress Energy Carolinas. “Our shared success depends on introducing energy concepts and related skills to students early in their education that will enable them to solve tomorrow’s energy challenges.”

High quality STEM education prepares all students – not just future scientists or engineers – to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. Increasingly, graduates require more flexible and adaptable understanding and competence in math, science and technology, no matter what paths they choose. A rigorous and relevant STEM education cultivates creativity and develops the problem-solving, communication and collaboration skills that drive innovation.

“Despite the national economic and employment situation, we have job openings now and we will have even more openings as we expand our operations in this state,” said Enrique Santacana, CEO of ABB Inc. “There has been a national shortage of electrical engineers for years, and the competition for young talent is expected to get severe as baby boomers retire over the next 10 years or so. We see North Carolina New Schools Project's emphasis in science, technology, engineering and math as a good fit for technology companies like ours. It has the potential to help our community's schools, students and companies.”

To prepare students to contribute and succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, they must learn STEM disciplines within the context of real-world problems. Schools that are part of the state’s STEM networks draw from a set of “grand challenges” identified by the National Academy of Engineering. Among the “challenges” the students are asked to help solve are how to make solar energy economical or how to provide access to clean water. In devising solutions, students must consider the economic, political, and social barriers as well as issues of ethics, sustainability and equity.

In partnership with the N.C. Department of Public Instruction, the State Board of Education, higher education, businesses and local school districts, the North Carolina New Schools Project’s vision for STEM-focused secondary school innovation calls for schools that provide the tools and space for exploration and invention and that also foster a culture of collaborative inquiry among faculty and students. STEM curriculum emphasizes connections between the fields of mathematics and science; integrates technology; and engages students in the engineering design process. The arts and humanities further support the STEM focus, and all courses highlight the role of STEM in the global society and economy.

*The North Carolina New Schools Project is a statewide public-private partnership that sparks sustainable innovation in North Carolina secondary schools. Its vision is to ensure every student graduates ready for college, careers and life. The North Carolina New Schools Project partners with school districts, businesses and higher education to link innovation in education to the emerging economy.*

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