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The North Carolina New Schools Project - INNOVATOR - May 2, 2011

NORTH CAROLINA NEW SCHOOLS PROJECT

INNOVATOR

News About Secondary School Innovation | newschoolsproject.org

May 2, 2011

Welcome to INNOVATOR, a bimonthly update on secondary school change from the North Carolina New Schools Project. Our newsletter is designed to inform practitioners, policymakers, and friends of public education on innovation, research and success stories from secondary schools. Please feel free to contact us, provide feedback and suggest article ideas.

NC businesses helping shape STEM education

Lynne Garrison
Vice President
NCNSP Strategic Partnerships and Engagement

Top corporate leaders met last month in Washington, DC, to rally behind a national campaign aimed at enlisting businesses to help boost student skills in science, technology, engineering and math and to get involved in a "STEM revolution." They heard from speakers urging sweeping change as a necessary step to improve student readiness. They heard from the authors of a new report, The Case for Being Bold, released by the meeting's host, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Institute for a Competitive Workforce, urging businesses to play a more active role in transforming education across the nation.

North Carolina is already in the game. As one of the nation's Race to the Top grant recipients, the state is in the process of developing networks of STEM-focused, non-traditional schools, with related businesses serving as essential partners. Those business leaders will ensure that direct link between economic development and education, providing students and teachers with hands-on learning experiences in the schools and in the workplace and assisting in the development of classroom projects, to name only a few samples of involvement. The aim is to help all schools and districts advance STEM education by linking deeply innovative schools to more conventional schools in every corner of North Carolina.

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Five NCNSP teachers named Kenan Fellows

Teachers from five innovative high schools in the state won recognition recently when they were named among the latest class of the Kenan Fellows Program for Curriculum and Leadership Development at N.C. State University. The five teachers were among 47 in all selected as part of the Kenan Fellows Class of 2012.

The competitive, two-year fellowship gives teachers the opportunity to interact with other outstanding teachers, policy and business leaders and

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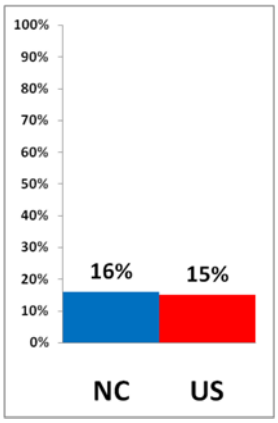
Measure of progress

Percentage of bachelor's degrees conferred in 2009 in STEM fields



Less than one fifth of the bachelor's degrees conferred in North Carolina and nationwide in 2009 were in STEM-related fields, which include natural sciences, math, computer science and engineering,

research scientists, and offers professional development aimed at building strong instructional leadership skills. Kenan Fellows remain in their classroom and develop curriculum projects in conjunction with research mentors from N.C. State University, other campuses of the University of North Carolina or in private industry.

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Students learn, share at STEM Symposium

Lucas Paynter was unflustered standing in front of a few dozen high school peers - part of a team of students from Warren New Tech High School explaining how they solved a murder mystery using a blood-splatter analysis.

"I like getting up and presenting to other students," the 18-year-old senior said over lunch at a recent student symposium at N.C. State University's McKimmon Center. Lucas was one of nearly 100 students from a half dozen innovative STEM-focused high schools who'd come to Raleigh to share what they'd learned from a team project they'd tackled during the year.

"I like the peer to peer connections," Lucas said. "When you hear from other students, it sticks with you more."

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according to a recent report.

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Meet an Innovator

Kevin Smith, principal of Duplin Early College High School, holds high expectations for the school and its students - and he ensures that those around him share the same standards. "I want our school to be a beacon of light in our community," he says.

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More news about secondary school innovation ...

SERVE Center at UNC-Greensboro to lead 3-year follow-up study of early college graduate outcomes
A $1.9 million grant fom the federal Institute of Education Sciences will allow current research about students in NC's early colleges to follow their progress through graduation and into postsecondary education.

Bertie Early College's design course instructors raise more than $13,000 for local tornado relief
Emily Pilloton and Matthew Miller, teacher-developers of Bertie Early College's Studio H design course, had to change their fund-raising goal because donations quickly amounted to twice their initial target.

Students at Wayne Early Middle College give a graduating senior a special gift to match her talent
WUNC Radio reports how students at the innovative school surprised a classmate and accomplished musician with a gift she'll use and remember long after graduation this spring.

Ninth graders at Bertie STEM High School bring "To Kill a Mockingbird" to life with dramatic project
The Roanoke-Chowan News-Herald reports on one example of how the innovative school is engaging its students. "It's not about sitting in a straight row and listening to a teacher," said Principal Glenwood Mitchell.

Federal report shows more high school graduates are completing a "rigorous" curriculum
National Assessment of Educational Progress transcript study finds that 13 percent of 2009 graduates completed higher level math and science courses, up from 5 percent in 1990.

... but just how rigorous is open to serious debate if test scores mean anything, some experts say
The New York Times reports that some studies show that "even though students are getting more credits in more advanced courses, they are not scoring any higher on standardized tests.

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