

SUMTER COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
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Press Release

Date: September 8, 2015
Contact: Colleen Strickland- Curriculum Supervisor

Re: Sumter Schools Elevate Plans to Increase STEM and STEAM Opportunities for Sumter County Students

The Sumter STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Advisory team has been working collaboratively to extend STEM opportunities throughout Sumter County schools. The Advisory consisting of school teachers, community members and experts in the field have identified current STEM initiatives in the district that will be scaled out over the next three years to be district wide. The initiatives are paired with training and support to ensure teacher and student success. Darlene Lanham, elementary science teacher said, "STEM Advisory members met with enthusiasm as ideas were shared and discussed at the first STEM meeting for the 2015-2016 school year." In October middle grades science teachers will attend STEAMtrax training an innovative software system that incorporates 3D printing technology. Schools will be equipped with 3D printer technology and the resources to implement project based learning. Teachers will also be attending the Florida Association of Science Teachers convention in Tallahassee focusing on successful K-12 practices for success in science education and STEM.

Through the STEM advisory, Sumter has formed many partnerships. Teen Trendsetters sponsored by the Barbara Bush Foundation is a new opportunity for students at Webster Elementary and South Sumter Middle School. Teen Trendsetters is a mentoring program that provides hands on support for reading through the sciences. In partnership with Lake Sumter State College, Advisory members met with Sara Corvil, Manager of the Minority Education STEM program to plan summer learning opportunities for students in the Biomedical field and a STEM Adventure camp for upcoming 8th graders. After a small group break out session, Chris Burk, Coordinator of Career and Technical Education said, "Our group discussed how important it was to offer a healthcare-themed university track to promote the rigorous math and science coursework required to make our students competitive in the postsecondary education arena. We are very excited by the opportunities Lake Sumter State College is going to offer to engage and motivate students towards healthcare career fields and look forward to building partnerships with other postsecondary institutions as well as businesses in the industry who may one day employ our students!" Students will continue to learn about STEM careers and environmental issues at the Sumter Environmental Education Center (SEEC) at the CEMEX mine in Center Hill. High school students will be working to develop mini STEM centers for elementary students to explore at the SEEC as part of the STEM plan. High school math teacher, Charlie Breen said, "STEM is our future, we are trying to get a head start!" School Superintendent Rick Shirley agreed by saying,

“One of our goals as a school district is to prepare our students for the job market of tomorrow-and STEM courses are critical to that goal.”

The Lake and Sumter school districts were awarded a \$473,000 state grant for their Math/Science Partnership Project. Through the project teachers will receive training in STEM subjects to help students in high-poverty areas be more successful in the classroom and on the new Florida Standards Assessment and FCAT Science. Three of Sumter’s schools will be the focus, all with free and reduced lunch rates higher than 60 percent. In Sumter those schools are Wildwood Elementary, South Sumter Middle and Wildwood Middle High. Educators will receive training and technical assistance from Florida State University, Florida Polytechnic University, the Orlando Science Center and TechKNOW associates. Teachers will form STEM teams, each with two to four members in the schools to develop STEM project based learning lessons of study in grades 3-12.

Thanks to a 5 year \$2.1 million federal grant funded through 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC), students attending four of Sumter’s schools are being offered after school programming throughout the school year. STEAM Team (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) is offered at Webster Elementary and Wildwood Elementary for students in grades 2-5 and Wildwood Middle High for students in grades 6-8. While participating in STEAM Team, students will be involved in project based learning activities focused on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics. Deana Squire, Biology teacher at Wildwood Middle High said, “STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) equals Schematic Teachers Educating Active Minds! Add a little Art for the creative side of the brain. This is the way to teach. STEAM Projects help build long term memory for important concepts. The best part is it motivates all students and its FUN!” Eligible high school students from Sumter Alternatives participate in the Sumter Leadership Academy. The Academy explores STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) career opportunities and develops work-ready/college ready skills through authentic project-based learning to help enhance skills needed in the workforce or higher education.

Photos: During the STEM Advisory meeting members participated in a Marshmallow Tower Design Challenge utilizing all phases of engineering design concepts.

[Picture 1 \(Tim Edwards, Deana Squire, Kevin Strickland, Chris Burk\) Planning Phase of the Marshmallow Tower Design Challenge](#)

[Picture 2 \(Mark Stephens, Emily Keeler\) Test Phase of the Marshmallow Tower Design Challenge](#)

[Picture 3 \(Tim Edwards, Deana Squire\) Admiring final Marshmallow Tower](#)

[Picture 4 \(Heather Davis, Dee Ragar, Charlie Breen, Dawn Moses\) Planning Phase of the Marshmallow Tower Design Challenge](#)