

STEMpact



April 8, 2020

Dear STEMpact Community,

We hope that you and your families are healthy and safe. We assure you, we are able to remain strong in our commitment to the work of STEMpact in spite of the many changes affecting our programs and partners. By listening, innovating, and reacting responsively we are supporting our current cohorts, transforming operations, and planning our work for the 20-21 school year and beyond.

Collaborative Support: Our STEMpact coaches, facilitators and the Institute for School Partnership Instructional Specialists are reaching out directly to our highest needs schools in order to listen, advise and assess needs. Immediate help has come in the form of providing vetted resources online, helping with the transitional tasks of setting up on-line classes, and holding office hours to consult with teachers. We are, almost daily, developing and initiating action items in response to our candid conversations with these educators.

STEM Challenges: A consistent request from teachers is for science activities that are engaging and not a set of “packets”. Our instructional specialists are quickly developing a new STEMpact project we are calling “STEM Challenges.” These weekly, online challenges will engage students and their families in fun, interactive activities that are aligned with our core educational values of exploration, collaboration, communication, and problem solving. Each challenge will present a problem around creation of a physical structure from household items. Once the structure is complete, students can share and hashtag on Twitter and by doing so, enter the STEM Challenge lottery to win a gift card.

To honor STEMpact’s commitment to educational equity, we will prepare STEM Challenge bags containing a parent/guardian letter, directions, and supplies for families who may not have access to computers and/or internet. These bags will be distributed to students along with meals through school food distribution centers. We plan to launch the STEM Challenge project in two weeks.

STL STEMitized: Even before our current sheltering situation, STEM TQ teachers were inspired to network and collaborate online after completing the program. Three of our STEM TQ teachers in 2019 created a Facebook page titled, “STL Stemitized.” That site, always important as a network for teachers wanting to share methods and stories around STEMitizing their students’ learning experience, has suddenly become a place of support and camaraderie as well.

STEM TQ: We are continuing with our current STEM TQ cohort to finish out this year’s follow-up sessions. STEMpact facilitators and teachers are completing the final round of sessions and culminating assignments online. The Google site we have used for years to disseminate and collect information has been quickly adapted for more heavy lifting. All STEM TQ completion requirements will be met by our cohort members.

The 20-21 STEM TQ and year-long follow-up has been canceled. Since the very essence of the institute is its immersive, interactive experiences, including STEM laboratories, group projects, and multiple field visits, distance instruction is not a viable alternative. STEM TQ will resume in the summer of 2021.

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STEMpact Leadership Series: The STEMpact Leadership Series is in the planning stage. The workshop series, highlighting the best practices in STEM education, will be announced in August for the 20-21 school year.

STEMpact District Immersion: The deadline for STEMpact District Immersion proposals was extended. This program places emphasis on systems improvement and STEMpact's goal of sustainability. We plan to select four or five awardees in the coming weeks. We hope to finalize district improvement plans via Zoom for the work to begin in Fall 2020.

A bit of great news!

One of our long time objectives has been to share the work of STEMpact with a national audience. I am happy to announce that we have our first peer-reviewed national publication about STEMpact. The article, "Collaborative Leverages Business and Community Resources for Transformative Approach to STEM Education," was published in *Connected Science Learning*, an online publication of the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) and the Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC). Here is a link to the article which was published in the March 2020 Issue on Effective Collaborations. Our article is listed under the heading "Diversity and Equity."

<http://csl.nsta.org/2020/03/stempact/>

In closing:

We truly appreciate your support and understanding as we navigate these challenges, while striving to serve our area educators and students.

Sincerely,

Vicki May
STEMpact Executive Director