

# AFTERSCHOOL STEM WORKS

## in Nebraska



Across Nebraska and nationwide, afterschool programs that focus on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) are stepping up to help students succeed in school today...

- ▶ Kids in afterschool programs attend school more often, get better grades and test scores, make gains in reading and math, and improve their work habits and classroom behavior.<sup>1</sup>

## ...And prepare for the jobs of tomorrow

In Nebraska, STEM-infused jobs are among the fastest growing and highest paying and their growth is key to diversifying our economy. Nebraska's entrepreneurs are struggling to fill these jobs due to the gap between the skills employers need and the skills workers have.

Quality afterschool STEM programs inspire young people to pursue careers they never imagined before—and help them gain skills needed for virtually every job in the future. Recently released research shows that among Nebraska students participating in afterschool STEM<sup>2</sup>:

- ▶ 87% reported a positive gain in science career knowledge
- ▶ Nearly 89% reported a positive change in their interest in science
- ▶ Nearly 83% reported gaining interest in science careers
- ▶ More than 86% reported an increase in “science identity”—a personal belief that he/she can succeed at science
- ▶ More than 78% reported an increase in their perseverance and critical thinking skills

### Quality afterschool programs

engage kids emotionally, intellectually and socially; they are responsive to the culture and community of the participants; and provide supportive learning environments for kids and facilitators to learn and explore together.<sup>3</sup>

### The Afterschool & STEM System Building Evaluation

**2016** was conducted by The PEAR Institute: Partnerships in Education and Resilience at Harvard University and the Institute for Measurement, Methodology, Analysis & Policy at Texas Tech University. The full study is available at [stemreadyamerica.org](http://stemreadyamerica.org).

Afterschool STEM compliments what kids learn at school and can almost double the amount of time some students have to explore STEM topics. Providing students these opportunities is a sound investment that you can support.

## Afterschool STEM in Nebraska: Chadron Anatomy/Physiology Club

Chadron Afterschool programs offer hands-on STEM afterschool and summer learning to 200 rural youth in grades K-8 each year. Youth work with college students to explore the anatomy and physiology of the human body and STEM subjects they can study in college.

“ These impressive findings about the impact of Nebraska’s afterschool programs confirm what common sense tells us – when Nebraska youth have access to more high quality STEM learning experiences, we all benefit. Businesses in particular benefit from afterschool and summer programs that provide young people with opportunities to develop a stronger identity as a STEM learner and interests in the STEM innovations that will drive Nebraska’s future economic growth.”

**CATHERINE LANG,**  
Director Nebraska Business  
Development Center

### Businesses can help

- ▶ Partner with afterschool and summer programs to enhance career exploration clubs supporting STEM and career readiness
- ▶ Invest in STEM activities for afterschool and summer programs
- ▶ Volunteer in afterschool programs and share simple STEM-related activities
- ▶ Support community Maker Spaces where kids and their families can discover and experiment

### Policymakers can help

- ▶ Seek dedicated funding for quality STEM afterschool programming to establish or expand programs
- ▶ Visit an afterschool STEM program

### Educators can help

- ▶ Classroom teachers can collaborate with afterschool programs to design STEM learning opportunities that complement school day lessons
- ▶ Administrators can prioritize STEM, afterschool and other informal learning opportunities in both your district’s A QuESTT and statewide ESSA plans
- ▶ Provide teachers with real-world training and experience in diverse settings, including afterschool and summer STEM programs, as part of the process for earning their hours of practice and observation.

### Parents can help

- ▶ Ask your school or afterschool program about STEM learning opportunities
- ▶ Share a story about what your child is doing in afterschool on the Nebraska STEM Facebook site [facebook.com/NebraskaSTEM](https://www.facebook.com/NebraskaSTEM)
- ▶ Sign up to learn more about afterschool STEM in Nebraska at [nebraskastem.org/](https://nebraskastem.org/) and [www.beyondschoolbells.org/STEM](https://www.beyondschoolbells.org/STEM)

<sup>1</sup> [www.afterschoolalliance.org/research.cfm](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/research.cfm)

<sup>2</sup> <http://stemreadyamerica.org/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nap.edu/read/21740/chapter/4>