

Developing a STEM Resource Group in Mansfield Public Schools: Enlisting parents working in STEM Fields

The Jordan/Jackson Elementary School and the Robinson Elementary School in Mansfield are enlisting the involvement of Mansfield parents that work in STEM fields as resources for increasing student interest in STEM and exploring STEM careers. Targeted fields include, but are not limited; to agriculture & natural resources, architecture, biological & biomedical sciences, computer & information science, engineering & engineering technology/technicians, robotics, health professions & clinical sciences, mathematics & statistics, physical sciences, precision production, military technology, mechanic/repair technician.

Joanne Jordan and John Nieratko, Robinson School co-principals, and Teresa Murphy, Jordan/Jackson School principal, are working with staff to broaden resources to support programs that focus on introducing STEM careers and strengthening STEM concepts beginning in early childhood. Programs offered to students and as professional development include "Emerging Engineers", "Where's the Math", and "How does this link to a STEM career?"

Key to Mansfield's plan to develop a STEM Resource Group is the involvement of parents who work in STEM fields. On March 5, 2015, interested parents were invited to attend a meeting at the Jordan/Jackson School to speak with teachers and school administrators. The meeting provided an overview of the program, goals, and volunteer expectations. Attendees talked about how those who work in STEM related fields can be a resource for teachers looking to increase student interest in STEM, prepare students so they persist in rigorous STEM studies, and increase student interest in pursuing careers in the STEM field.

Response to the meeting invitation was very positive with 51 parents expressing interest in being involved in the STEM Resource Group. Of those expressing interest, 16 parents attended the meeting and represented a wide range of STEM fields including environmental science, software engineering, cyber security, physical therapy and biology. Parents noted that the meeting was effective and informative. Administrators felt that this meeting would lay the foundation for future collaboration and provide valuable resources for teachers.

As a result of the meeting, many parents offered to volunteer to conduct classroom presentations. The schools are moving forward to gather information regarding availability, areas of expertise, and types of technology and resources they could demonstrate to students.

"Mansfield educators and community members have been involved in SE MA STEM Network events since 2012," notes Katherine Honey, SE MA STEM Network coordinator. "During that time they have collaborated to develop programs that ensure all students are STEM literate. These professionals understand that the seeds for STEM success begin early and need to be nurtured at all grade levels."