



# STEM Pathways Evaluation: Interviews with Minneapolis Public Schools Leaders

## *Executive Summary*

STEM Pathways aims to increase youths' long-term interest, learning and achievement in STEM through a deliberate and interconnected system of STEM learning opportunities. STEM Pathways is a partnership of Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS), the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), The Bakken, The Bell Museum of Natural History, Minnesota Zoo, STARBASE Minnesota, and The Works that tests a model for collaboration that could be expanded and replicated across more grade levels, schools, organizations, and communities. STEM Pathways serves fourth- and fifth-grade students at six elementary schools in MPS. This report summarizes findings from interviews with MPS leaders (district staff and school principals) involved with STEM Pathways and/or who work closely with STEM education in the district.

## Key findings

### *MPS leaders believe that STEM Pathways:*

- Provides students with **good experiences in science and math**
- **Expands student access** to STEM learning activities and promotes career exploration
- Increases ability within schools to **integrate science and literacy** requirements
- **Provides modeling for teachers**, inspires them, and increases their interest in STEM topics—giving them new ideas for ways to incorporate STEM education into their classroom
- **Connects and aligns** informal education opportunities to state standards and MPS learning targets
- **Increases resources** available to schools and the district and helps them use these resources more strategically

*Successes of STEM Pathways include:*

- **Strengthened relationships** between the MPS district, including individual Pathways schools, and STEM Pathways partner organizations resulting in better alignment of programming
- **Growing enthusiasm and engagement** in STEM learning from students as a result of STEM Pathways activities

*MPS leaders identified challenges related to STEM Pathways including:*

- **Finding funding for schools to participate**, particularly funding for the cost of buses and site visits
- **Lack of consistent communication**—communication between teachers and informal education sites prior to the field trip visits varied for each partner organization
- **A lack of alignment with the district's goal related to serving all students** because it only provides the experience for fourth- and fifth-graders at a fraction of Minneapolis Public Schools

*To improve STEM Pathways, MPS leaders recommended:*

- **Securing funding** for buses for STEM Pathways schools
- **Involving teachers** in a kick-off meeting at the beginning of the year
- Giving teachers the **opportunity to give feedback** on their experiences with the partner organizations
- Providing **professional development opportunities** for the teachers involved in STEM Pathways

A separate full report presents detailed findings from the interviews with MPS leaders involved with STEM Pathways and/or who work closely with STEM education in the district.

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### For more information

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