



Iowa kicks off science, math conference



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DES MOINES — Gov. Terry Branstad on Monday hailed Iowa's efforts to promote science, technology, engineering and math education to its young people as a public-private success story that will pay dividends for years to come.

Branstad told nearly 600 participants at a statewide science, technology, engineering and math, or STEM, summit that the effort that started in July 2011 was intended to elevate the importance of STEM courses and their potential for Iowa's economic development and "you have

done just that."

"I am proud that the STEM Council is set to break records for the number of participating educators and students next school year," Branstad said.

He said the state has made "impressive progress" in creating a network of six STEM regions partnering with hub colleges and universities and delivering first-rate STEM education programs both inside and outside schools to more than 100,000 young Iowans this school year.

"STEM's about expanding opportunities for all, and I am seeing it every day. STEM's changing lives," Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds, co-chair of the Iowa STEM Advisory Council, said at a news conference that kicked off the summit. "We only have to look at what's happening throughout Iowa to see that that's absolutely true."

Reynolds said a regional FIRST Tech Challenge was held in Des Moines last weekend with teams from Iowa and 13 other states participating. From that event, teams from schools in Marion, Denver, Oskaloosa and Davenport are headed to the FIRST Tech world competition in St. Louis.

During Monday's event, summit participants were presented virtual tours of STEM classrooms in Sioux Center and Davenport West high schools and heard how to redesign courses and activities to get students more actively engaged in problem-solving, innovating and team-building.

"Today is a seismic day for Iowa," said Jeff Weld, STEM executive director. "This is the future of Iowa that assembles in that room."

