

## Searching for STEM programs or Search4STEM

I thought I had written up this experience but it appears it has remained in my memory and is only brought out when someone asks about recent endeavors.

A few years ago when people were emailing me to ask for help in locating a STEM program or for introductions to others in the STEM fields, it became clear that no one in MA knew about all the existing programs and initiatives. There was no central place to find information about STEM activity in MA.

One result is that many people were developing programs in the same space, a huge waste of energy, intelligence and scarce resources. And unnecessary duplication of effort.

I spoke with several people in other states about what they were doing and found Search4STEM to be of interest and not yet on too many people's radar. Change the Equation was developing a product but it was designed for their members to monitor their own ROI in STEM projects nationally. No. Carolina was thinking ahead also.

Working with a colleague, I invested \$8K to have a developer and designer in India produce the Search4STEM splash page and configuration.

I mentioned the idea of creating such a site, starting with MA, then IA and finally the country, at a Boston STEM network meeting and a woman sitting at my table said she might be able to help.

After I filled out an application I was awarded \$50K to complete the site. We worked with her and her assistant as they tried both to improve on the idea and to direct it where they wanted it to go.

After several months of meeting and the development of an Advisory Council which met once, we suffered two blows:

1. Since the support was from a quasi public/quasi private organization in MA, we were told we had to use an MA developer. We understood and started to investigate

We had paid \$8K for two months work...

MA developers wanted \$7K for one week's work

2. The second came from a high level official in the MA educational arena who said that it was not a good idea. He had tried it in another state and it hadn't worked. He made that comment at a meeting of a few people including the woman who had sat at the table with me and offered her help. (As I said to him when I learned of this and went to his office to try to convince him S4S was the right thing to do right now, "It was tried about a decade before when technology and life were different, and perhaps the execution wasn't as developed as ours.")

Those two blows caused the organization to stop the work with us.

What brought it mind recently is that NC STEM announced a center.  
“([www.ncstemcenter.org](http://www.ncstemcenter.org)) now serves as a one-stop shop for resources, information and activities involving STEM education throughout North Carolina.” The Center is larger in scope than Search4STEM but there are many shades of S4S in it!

On the Iowa front, S4S was written into the NSF grant the state submitted and which it received.

When it came time for me to start the work, the Lt Governor had committed to develop the project with one of the publishing companies. I was offered a role as a paid adviser to “... a clearing house, electronic data base that is widely accessible with information,” or I could remain on the Council. I chose the latter.

So my dream has not yet come true...

June 5, 2014 in retrospect