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## (Grant Wood Area Education Agency Corridor STEM Initiative After-School Grant Awards)

Cedar Rapids...Grant Wood AEA is pleased to announce that six area schools have been awarded mini-grants of \$13,000 each to provide after-school programs to support instruction in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The grants are designed to help schools provide fun, exciting and educationally sound supplemental after-school programs to youth in grades 3 through 8.

Long-term goals of the project are to:

- Increase the number of Iowa students that enter and succeed in the STEM workforce
- Expand student understanding of STEM content
- Build student interest in STEM learning and careers.

Schools receiving the grants include: McKinley Middle School, Cedar Rapids Community; Prairie Heights Elementary and Prairie Middle School, College Community; English Valleys Elementary, English Valleys Community; Hills Elementary, Iowa City Community; and Novak Elementary, Linn-Mar Community.

Funding for these mini-grants came from a \$200,000 competitive grant awarded by the Iowa Department of Education. The grant was authorized by the Iowa Legislature earlier this year. It was awarded to Grant Wood AEA by Governor Culver during August, 2007.

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Schools will be asked to recruit a diverse student population to participate in these programs. Each site will accommodate up to 30 students and they will provide weekly hands-on learning activities for the participants. In addition, schools will be asked to form partnerships with local businesses, and support organizations like the ISU Extension, The Workplace Learning Connection, Science Station, and the Grant Wood AEA VAST Center to help meet desired outcomes.

Grant Wood AEA has hired a Teacher-In-Residence to provide increased support and professional development for teachers and support personnel as they connect the after-school activities to the every day instruction and curriculum in the district.

Jim Thornton, former administrator from the Cedar Rapids School District is coordinating the grant on behalf of Grant Wood AEA. Says Thornton, “The participating schools will be chronicling their work this year so that schools wishing to replicate their projects across the state can benefit in the future. We are hopeful that we will be able to show growth in not only interest in STEM-related fields of study, but an increased awareness and knowledge of STEM careers and the opportunities that are available in the Corridor and the State of Iowa.”

For more information, contact Jim Thornton at (319) 399-6555, Ext. 6640.

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