

April 13, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

I write this letter as the STEM Specialist for the Indiana Department of Education and I am pleased to share with you how The STEM Connection supports education in Indiana. The Indiana Department of Education released the Indiana STEM Six-Year Strategic Plan in the fall of 2018. This plan is aligned with the Federal STEM plan. The vision for Indiana's plan is as follows: All Indiana students in grades K-12 will graduate with critical thinking skills and be prepared for an innovation-driven economy by accessing quality, world-class STEM education every day in the classroom by 2025.

Indiana's vision for quality STEM education is rigorous. Achieving this vision is vital to Indiana's future success and will require the support of community partners. Community partners can support schools through immersive field trip experiences and hands-on activities for students, and by providing professional development for teachers so they can offer quality STEM education in their own classrooms.

The STEM Connection is an example of a quality education-based community partner. The focus of the STEM Connection is connecting STEM to the natural world. Many schools, especially urban schools, lack outside STEM facilities for students. The STEM Connection is fortunate to have a 30 acre site that includes a deciduous forest, Eagle Creek, fields of crops and a garden. STEM Connections' programming is aligned with Indiana's Academic standards, Process standards, and Employability Skills standards.

The STEM Connection is a non-profit organization. Operational funding comes from fees associated with field trips and teacher professional development. In efforts to support learning during extended school closures, the STEM Connection continues to offer programming for students remotely at no cost to participants. IDOE would be supportive of additional funding for the STEM Connection so that Indiana schools will have the opportunity to return to the outdoor center once schools are back in session.

Sincerely,
Dr. Christina L. Hilton