



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Illinois Science and Technology Institute's R&D STEM Learning Exchange Announces Expanded Schools and Industry Partners for 2014-15 School Year**

***Over 1,000 students at more than 25 high schools across Illinois will work with industry and universities to take on real-world innovation challenges and research questions***

**Chicago, Ill. – October 14, 2014 –** The [Illinois Science and Technology Institute \(ISTI\)](#) today announced the expansion of the Research & Development STEM Learning Exchange, a public-private partnership to better connect students to careers in STEM fields. The initiative will scale to reach more than 1,000 students at 28 Illinois high schools and involve more than 50 cross-sector partners in its second year of implementation. Through a number of programs, the R&D STEM Learning Exchange promotes inquiry-based learning, builds critical thinking skills and provides perspective on R&D applications within Illinois industry to cultivate a stronger talent pipeline.

"The R&D STEM Learning Exchange's mission is to spark interest and prepare students for R&D careers to build a pipeline of professionals that become Illinois' future innovators. The growth of this program and our strong public-private coalition has allowed us to increase the applied learning opportunities and career exploration for more Illinois students," said Mark Harris, president & CEO of the ISTI, an affiliate of the Illinois Science & Technology Coalition.

As part of this initiative, students will work with experts at Baxter International, ComEd, Illinois State University's Center for Renewable Energy, Microsoft, Motorola Mobility, Motorola Solutions, Northrop Grumman, TGG Group and Takeda Pharmaceuticals, to address relevant innovation challenges identified by these organizations. Students will also work with a broader network of partners such as Argonne National Laboratory, Northern Illinois University, Northwestern University and University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign through the [Mentor Matching Engine](#), an invitation-based web platform that connects Illinois high school students and their teachers to STEM professionals who serve as online mentors to guide students through student-led research. The Mentor Matching Engine was built and is administered by a partnership of the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy, Illinois Science & Technology Institute, and Northwestern University.

Partner high schools for 2014-2015 include:

- Chicago Vocational Career Academy
- DePaul College Prep
- Glenbrook South High School
- Harlan Community Academy High School
- Hinsdale Central High School



- Holy Trinity High School
- Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy
- Instituto Health Sciences Career Academy
- Lake View High School
- Lane Tech College Prep
- Lindblom Math and Science Academy
- Maine South High School
- Maine West High School
- Minooka Community High School
- Muchin College Prep
- Naperville North High School
- Niles North High School
- North Chicago Community High School
- Oak Park and River Forest High School
- Palatine High School
- Prairie Central High School
- Stevenson High School
- Urbana High School
- Von Steuben Metropolitan Science Center
- Washington Community High School
- Waukegan High School
- Wheeling High School
- Williamsfield School

“Maine South is honored to partner with the R&D STEM Learning Exchange this year. We feel that the opportunities afforded to our students and staff through this experience will have lasting positive impacts on learning through exposure to the expertise of the professionals working in STEM fields and the real-world issues that they face,” said Daun Biewenga, Science Department Chair, Maine South High School. “Students in our Biotechnical Engineering course will tackle a challenge problem from Takeda Pharmaceuticals, while our students in our Research Course and Geology classes will receive guidance from industry and university mentors on their own independent research projects through the Mentor Matching Engine. We are certain that our students will improve their problem solving and critical thinking skills through these experiences and will gain a unique outlook on opportunities in STEM careers for their future.”

“Microsoft is thrilled to partner with the R&D STEM Learning Exchange to build on our strong partnership with Lake View High School. By incorporating the inter-disciplinary R&D STEM Challenge into curriculum, and applying STEM principles to real-life situations, the students will see STEM ‘come alive’ inside and outside of the classroom. We value our partnership with ISTI and the innovative approach to hands-on learning with Lake View High School,” said Shelley Stern Grach, Director, Technology and Civic Innovation, Microsoft.

The R&D STEM Learning Exchange is part of Illinois Pathways, a \$10.3 million initiative launched in 2012 by Governor Quinn to better prepare students to compete in the global economy. The STEM Learning Exchanges are designed to coordinate investments, resources and planning for programs that empower youth and adults to explore academic and career interests in STEM fields.



In its pilot year, the R&D STEM Learning Exchange impacted more than 500 students and 30 teachers through three key initiatives. Teachers and students can also connect with partners through the [R&D STEM Resource Repository](#), a curated collection of STEM programs and resources in Illinois.

The following video provides additional information about the STEM Challenge:  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AiyEZGoQZwU>)

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**About The Illinois Science and Technology Institute**

The [Illinois Science & Technology Institute \(ISTI\)](#) is a 501(c)(3) public charity and an affiliated, complementary effort to the [Illinois Science & Technology Coalition](#). The mission of the ISTI is to advance scientific understanding and technological innovation in Illinois through discovery, education, invention, and partnership.

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