

CALL TO ACTION

STEM push called vital to state's economic future

by [Todd Engdahl](#) on August 27, 2014



Lack of a “statewide vision” and strategy for STEM education “is impeding Colorado’s ability to develop a strong local talent pipeline needed for an innovation economy,” according to a new Colorado STEM Education Roadmap.

The paper was issued Wednesday by the Colorado Education Initiative (CEI) and is intended to build support for STEM education and improve such instruction in the state’s schools.

“Colorado is expected to see above national average growth in STEM occupations over the

next decade as well as a rapid increase in the demand for STEM talent across non-STEM professions. However, Colorado's students are not adequately prepared to compete for these jobs," said the 12-page document. (Read full roadmap [here](#), and learn more about the initiative's STEM work [here](#).)

The roadmap also cited a "lack of diversity" among STEM students and workers and said only about half the students who gain STEM credentials actually enter related fields.

The document was released on a busy day for STEM advocates. Safra Catz, co-president of Oracle, called for improved STEM education during a speech to the Colorado Innovation Summit ([see Denver Business Journal story](#)). The roadmap was released at the COIN conference.

Later in the day, CEI hosted a panel discussion during which business, state and school leaders discussed the issue before a crowd of more than 250.

"Strengthening STEM education and experiences for all our students is key to developing an educated workforce and engaged community," Lt. Governor Joe Garcia said in a statement. "The Colorado STEM Education Roadmap demonstrates Colorado's commitment to developing a strong talent pipeline rich in diversity." Garcia, who's also director of the Department of Higher Education, is a member of the STEM Advisory Committee.

The vision of the roadmap is that "Colorado will become most innovative state in U.S. in growing a local talent pipeline to ensure all students have STEM education and experiences to succeed."

The document's goals include:

- Building public support for STEM education, creating a definition of quality STEM education and better aligning the system.
- Improving STEM education in elementary schools, better support of teachers and improving rural access to such training. The document noted, "Focusing on STEM education in the early grades is critical to achieving STEM literacy. ... Yet, in Colorado, the

BEHIND THE ACRONYM

STEM stands for "science, technology, engineering and math" and has become a widely used term among business leaders and educators concerned that the nation is lagging in educating students for both existing technical fields and for future jobs necessary for innovation and economic growth.

time spent on science in elementary school has decreased from 2.9 hours per week in 1993-1994 to 1.6 hours per week in 2011-2012, landing Colorado in the bottom five states in terms of time spent on science in the early grades.”

- Significantly reducing the need for math remediation in college, increasing the number of postsecondary STEM credentials issued and increasing female participation in the field.

The initiative is acting as the coordinator for the effort and is bringing together business leaders, educators and others to work on developing a statewide plan for improving STEM education. CEI also is seeking corporate funding for the effort.

CEI was formerly known as the Colorado Legacy Foundation and raises funds for initiatives and grants to schools in the areas of educator effectiveness, health and wellness, next generation learning and implementation of recent state education reform initiatives.

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