



2022-2023 IMPACT REPORT

Today's Students Are Tomorrow's Employees

Message from the Executive Director

Greetings Partners & Friends,

I am honored and humbled to lead a fantastic staff dedicated to making a difference in the lives of students and building a strong local talent pipeline. I am also overwhelmed by the dedication and commitment of our partners, as we delve deep into the work of the Local Educational Attainment Collaborative. **We remain focused on our ambitious goal of ensuring that 2 million North Carolinians have a high-quality credential or postsecondary degree by 2030.**

STEP will continue to:

- Facilitate collaboration within the Twin-Counties to support and strengthen workforce development initiatives in our public schools and community colleges;
- Identify current and emerging workforce development needs and seek solutions; and
- Expand work-based learning experiences for underrepresented youth to help alleviate generational poverty in the Twin-Counties.

This Impact Report looks back on last year's successes and the numerous initiatives we undertook to create career and company awareness for the students in Edgecombe and Nash Counties. I thank our Board of Directors, whose collective skills and passion are unmatched. I deeply appreciate their dedication to our work and look forward to working alongside them to lead the Twin-Counties and STEP to an even brighter future.

Our deepest appreciation to our Financial Supporters listed below. You made our work possible.

*Best regards,
Pamela K. Gould*

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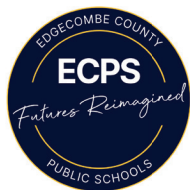
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STEP Is a Connector That Facilitates Collaboration to Achieve Shared Goals

STEP serves as a vital connector, facilitating collaboration among students, educators, and employers toward a common goal. Our work-based learning model encompasses career exploration, awareness, job shadowing, internships, and apprenticeships, and we provide a comprehensive framework for empowering individuals in their career journeys.

As a connector, we foster collaboration between educational institutions and employers, ensuring that our work-based learning model aligns with the needs of both parties. By forging these partnerships, we

create a seamless pathway for students to gain practical skills, industry knowledge, and mentorship—ultimately enhancing their employability and career prospects.

STEP's commitment to collaboration and our work-based learning model serve as the main vehicle through which we empower individuals to explore, grow, and thrive in their chosen careers. Together, we strive towards a common goal of preparing the workforce of tomorrow through experiential learning and meaningful connections.



Healthcare Connections: Medical professionals from ECU Health Edgecombe & UNC Health Nash Hospitals joined Edgecombe Community College Health Science educators to host 225 students at the Biotechnology and Medical Simulation Center.



Lunch with an Engineer connects high school students with engineers from local companies to increase awareness about career opportunities in the engineering field.



Employer in the Foyer: High school seniors who want to go directly into the workforce are connected with numerous companies such as World Cat.



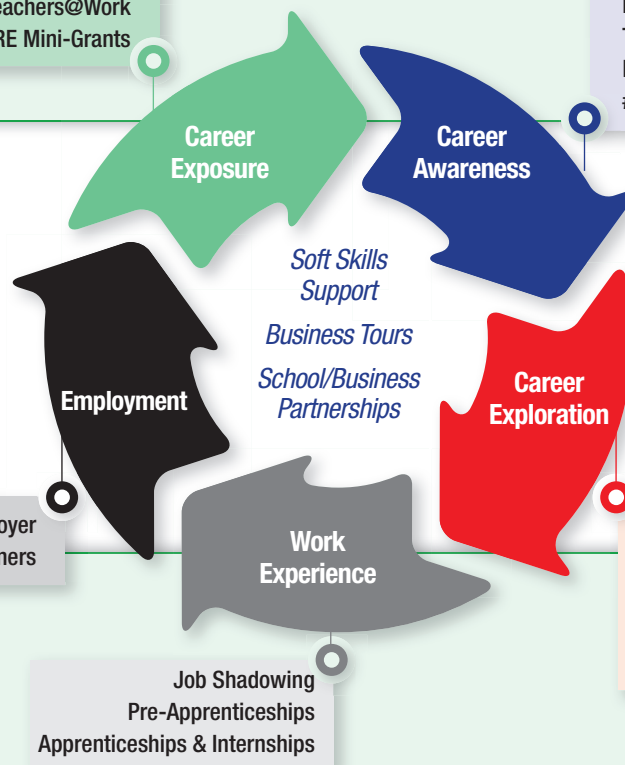
Educational Attainment: STEP is the backbone organization leading the cross-sector collaborative focused on three objectives: advancing 3rd–8th grade literacy proficiency; increasing FAFSA completion rates; and enhancing the alignment of career and technical pathways with local labor market trends.

Our Work-Based Learning Continuum

STEP has created a full continuum of experiences accessible to students throughout their educational journey. To prepare a dynamic workforce for the Twin-Counties, students need to be exposed to multiple career options as early as possible. Each of these learning opportunities relies on relationships with employers.

Brick City LEGO Challenge
Teachers@Work
#workHERE Mini-Grants

STEM Design Challenge
Invention Convention
Teachers@Work
Manufacturing Day
#workHERE Mini-Grants



Employer in the Foyer, 2022-2023

Companies participating in this event connect directly with students who are interested in becoming their future employees.

905+ Students/Potential Employees

30 Employers



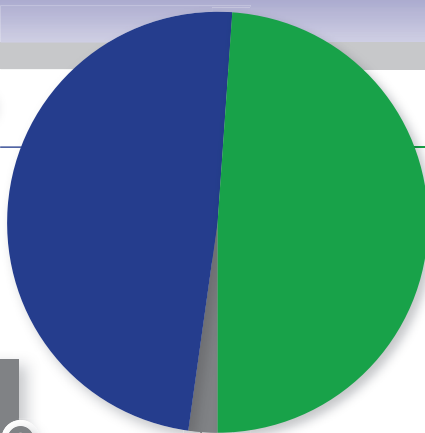
WE SURVEYED STUDENTS AND ASKED:

How likely are you to apply at one of these companies?"

Highly likely
49.3%

Somewhat likely
49.3%

Not likely
1.5%



98.5% of students surveyed agreed Employer in the Foyer increased their awareness of participating employers and their willingness to apply to the livable wage careers they offer.

Connecting Employers Directly to Tomorrow's Workforce



EMPLOYER

Rocky Mount Fire Department (RMFD)

Tia Armstrong, Recruitment Officer

NEW EMPLOYEE

Justin Braswell

Tia Armstrong, a compassionate and forward-thinking recruitment officer at Rocky Mount Fire Department (RMFD), has become a catalyst for change in the lives of countless others. She says success is not measured by conventional metrics, but rather by the lives she touches and the dreams she ignites. Her ability to recognize untapped potential has helped shape the future of numerous young people, one Employer in the Foyer at a time.

It was at this event that Tia met Justin Braswell, a Nash County Public School senior. He didn't yet have a clear sense of direction. Recognizing his spark, Tia invested time and effort to understand his strengths, interests, and aspirations. During his RMFD academy training, Justin thrived under the guidance of mentors and colleagues who recognized his potential. This hands-on experience allowed him to develop skills, gain practical knowledge, and build a strong foundation for his career.

Justin is pictured on the cover of this report completing a training exercise with RMFD.

Edwards, Inc. is an industrial general contractor offering construction, fabrication, and crane services. Like many businesses in the our area, they're experiencing labor shortages, especially in skilled trade positions. To address this challenge, they've partnered with STEP, as we work with local schools to connect students with career opportunities.

Kaleigh May at Edwards, Inc. participates in the Employer in the Foyer events held at high schools in Nash and Edgecombe Counties. She reports great success, particularly with schools that offer pathways related to their industry. Students who graduate from these programs come equipped with certificates, practical skills, and a strong work ethic.

Zachary Baines, who graduated from CITI High and pursued an Electrical Systems Technology degree at Nash Community College, is one of the company's recent recruits. He appreciates the growth opportunities Edwards, Inc. provides and describes the company as a fantastic workplace. Zachary has been able to save money, become financially independent, and advance in his career. Collaborating with STEP provides the company with access to a skilled workforce, while students and recent graduates like Zachary receive opportunities for success.



EMPLOYER

Edwards, Inc.

Kaleigh May, Corporate Recruiter

NEW EMPLOYEE

Zachary Baines

**GET
INVOLVED!**

To get involved and offer a life-changing opportunity to the smart and talented students of the Twin-Counties and surrounding areas, please visit www.step-partnership.org/contact-us or send an email requesting more information to info@step-partnership.org.

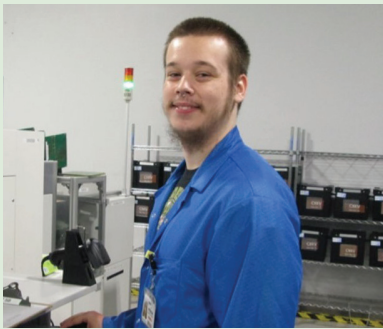
STEP's Students@Work Program

During the 2022–2023 school year, our program achieved a commendable 75% success rate, helping to ensure a smooth transition to full-time employment for the participants.



Areina Harris

“As a senior in college, I recognized the importance of internships in shaping my career path after graduation. It was crucial for me to garner practical work experiences and explore potential careers to help me narrow down my pursuits. Being able to secure an internship with STEP through the [Students@Work](#) program has been instrumental in my journey towards success. I am forever grateful for this program, which provides aspiring professionals like me with invaluable opportunities. The program has not only allowed me to gain relevant work experience but has also solidified my passion for marketing. The exposure and support I received during my internship have greatly impacted my growth; I am excited to take the next steps in my journey, armed with the experiences and skills I have gained through the Students@Work program.”



Malachi Hunt

“When I was about to graduate, I wasn’t sure what my life would look like after high school. I knew that college wasn’t my first option, but I didn’t want to settle for just any job without purpose or advancement opportunities. That’s when the [Students@Work](#) program came into my life, offering me an opportunity of a lifetime to gain awareness and explore different occupations. Today, I am thrilled to say that because of this program, I have embarked on a fulfilling career that provides me with purpose and ample opportunities for growth. I am grateful for the life-changing experience that Students@Work has provided me.”



Tray Ruffin

“The on-the-job training and support from the team have played a crucial role in my personal growth, even within such a short time frame. I am immensely grateful for this opportunity, as I cannot fathom where I would be or what I would be doing if I hadn’t been given this chance. The [Students@Work](#) program has truly been a turning point in my life, and I am excited to embrace the future with confidence and gratitude.”



Tylan Pitt

“My work experience through the [Students@Work](#) internship has truly transformed my life for the better. As an intern, I have gained invaluable knowledge in automotive technology. Initially, I felt overwhelmed and contemplated quitting, but then I realized that I was not only learning but also getting paid for it. This realization motivated me to persevere, and now, looking back, I am incredibly grateful that I stuck with it. The experience has led me to a rewarding career that I am proud to be a part of.”

Additional Program Highlights

STEP's Annual STEM Competitions

100% of teachers surveyed agreed: their students were more aware of local STEM careers after participating in these competitions.

\$30,000+

Donated to support
STEM education in
the Twin-Counties

Twin-Counties Brick City Engineer Challenge



"It was awesome to see all of the new skills that my students have been working on come to fruition as they were working on the challenges. They were so proud of everything they were able to accomplish, and they enjoyed the experience!"

O. Huneycutt, Hearne Elementary Schools

Twin-Counties STEM Design Challenge & Invention Convention



"The STEM Design Challenge is a wonderful opportunity to engage children in the many layers of STEM! My students loved working on the different aspects of the challenge ranging from designing and building with the K'Nex kit to programming a robot! I feel that one of the most important attributes to this challenge was working with our business partners from Pfizer! Because of their expertise, they were very instrumental in the success of this challenge. Working with our business partners also provided opportunities for the students to learn about real world jobs in the field of STEM."

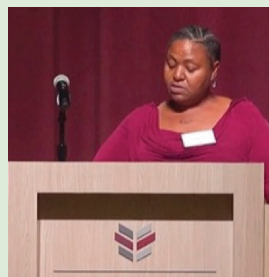
Meg Billups Media Coordinator/STEM Coach, Edwards Middle School



Teachers@Work

This program provides educators with invaluable insight and practical experience regarding the career skills that today's students need to be successful employees.

12 Teacher Externs 9 Companies
1,300 students impacted



Chrisola Hamm Takes Her Experience on the Road

Chrisola Hamm, teacher extern with STEP's **Teachers@Work** program, presented to statewide leaders at the annual meeting of the NC Business Committee for Education. Her experience with the Rocky Mount Chamber's Director of Economic Development sparked an exciting project for her students at Northern Nash High School. The students met with city officials to share their ideas regarding repurposing Golden East Mall.

STEP IS MUCH MORE THAN A WORKFORCE PROGRAM.

We are a unique & essential economic development partner in the Twin-Counties.

OUR MISSION

STEP, Strategic Twin-Counties Education Partnership, is improving the educational opportunities for students in the Twin-Counties—cradle to career—by facilitating collaboration between our schools, our community colleges, our community-based organizations, and our employers.

Our ultimate goal is to build a strong local talent pipeline for the mutual benefit of employers and employees.

WE WANT TO PARTNER WITH YOU!

Here are just a few of the many ways you can help ensure that today's students become exceptional employees:

Provide internships at your organization so that students can gain experience, explore their interests, develop skills, network with professionals, and earn school credit.

Offer short-term teacher externships that could involve shadowing a professional during their workday, informational interviews, facility tours, participation in facility activities, and more.

Donate equipment for training purposes.

Serve on a program specific advisory board.

Provide information about your industry at a lunch-and-learn event.

Host one-day job shadowing experiences for students.

Serve as a guest speaker to share current issues within your company and workforce.

Our students want to be prepared for the jobs available in their hometowns. Employers in the Twin-Counties need to develop a local skilled workforce. Contact us today to find out more about how you can become involved in our work!



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