

**Congratulations to 2020 I.O.W.A.
STEM Teacher Award Recipient -
Melissa Taft**



The recipient of the 2020 I.O.W.A. STEM Teacher Award in the North Central Region sponsored by Kemin Industries is Melissa Taft from Forest City. Ms. Taft is a first grade teacher at Forest City Elementary School in Forest City, Iowa. Taft was selected for her work to bring STEM resources to all students in her school, as well as her efforts to create STEM curriculum that engages young Iowans in creative ways.

According to Principal Brad Jones, Taft doesn't work for personal recognition. He says she teaches because she truly wants to help students—and she knows that STEM education is important for preparing her students for the future.

Several years ago, Ms. Taft was the first educator at her school to apply for STEM Scale-Up programs. She was awarded that first program and went on to be awarded several more. As she saw the impact these programs had for STEM resources in her classroom, she encouraged other educators to apply with her. Now, just a few years after she first began, six teachers are using Scale-Up programming in their classrooms.

Using those resources and her own creativity, she has created curriculum that exposes first grade students to STEM concepts early on, so they can build a strong future. Though her students are just starting their elementary education, Taft brings advanced opportunities to her classroom. Students get to use technology like robotics, iPads, computers and more to work on problem solving, collaboration, critical thinking, communication and creativity.

She also makes sure her young students get to work with older students and STEM professionals to expand their learning. One of her standout curriculum

**2020 Transforming
Education for the
Workforce Summit is
Postponed**

Due to recommendations made by the CDC and Governor, the 2020 Transforming Education for the Workforce Summit is postponed. Iowans who have paid for the event will receive a refund and a new date for the Summit will be announced in the near future.

**Need Help on Your
STEM BEST
Application?**

The STEM BEST Program was developed to strengthen partnerships between schools and businesses in Iowa. It allows educators to work side-by-side with industry professionals to craft a unique STEM curriculum centered around work-based learning!

Questions around how to get started or applying for a STEM BEST Award? Informational webinars are available: <https://iowastem.gov/STEMBEST/application>

Event Updates

The Boone Family STEM Festival scheduled for April 25 has been cancelled. For up-to-date information on North Central STEM Events, check out our [Festival Page](#).

**Upcoming
Opportunities for
Educators**

concepts is called STEM Big Buddies. In it, fifth grade students worked with her first graders to solve STEM problems together. The younger students learned about the concepts, while fifth grade participants learned about creativity from their counterparts. It benefited all students. Taft also brings professionals in over video chat to help her students connect STEM concepts to future career options.

This award recognizes and celebrates one teacher from each of the six STEM regions who goes above and beyond to increase their student's interest in STEM. Each recipient was selected by a panel of judges after being nominated for the award by a colleague, school administrator, parent, student or community member and completing an application showcasing their contributions to STEM education. Each recipient will receive \$1,500 for their classroom—as well as another \$1,500 for personal use. Ms. Taft and the other five recipients have each been honored with ceremonies in their classrooms with their students and peers. They were also recognized together at STEM Day at the Capitol, with Gov. and STEM Council Co-Chair Kim Reynolds and a representative from Kemin Industries on February 19, 2020. For more information about the award and all current and previous recipients, please visit <https://iowastem.gov/teacheraward>.

Biotechnology Education Summer Workshops, more information [here](#)
Research Experience through the Office of Biotechnology, more information [here](#)



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STEM Day at the Capitol - Students Highlighting STEM



STEM Day at the Capitol was held on February 19 at the Capitol Rotunda. The 23 displays this year highlighted STEM Council programs and the students who have benefited from them. As attendees and legislators explored the displays, students provided highlights from projects and demonstrated technology they use in their classroom. Exhibitors included STEM BEST models, STEM Scale-Up Program awardees, Computer Science is Elementary models and representatives of other STEM Council programs.

The event was sponsored by Collins Aerospace and Vermeer Corporation. The day featured opening remarks by Gov. Reynolds and the presentation of the 2020 I.O.W.A. STEM Teacher Award by Kemin Industries Vice President and General Counsel Libby Nelson, who highlighted the STEM Council's progress, along with the ongoing need for STEM education to prepare young people for a competitive, global economy. For photos and videos from STEM Day at the Capitol, visit our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/IowaSTEM/>.

2019-20 NC STEM Advisory Board

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Melissa Taft, winner of the 2020 I.O.W.A. STEM Teacher Award in the North Central Region, was presented the award at STEM Day at the Capitol. Ms. Taft was joined at the Capitol by Kelly Bergman, NC STEM Manager, and NC STEM Advisory Board Members Sara Nelson, Matthew Stephan, Jerry Chizek, Michael Young and Michael Pedersen.

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