Hart County STEM Education Initiative
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When the Hart County Archway Partnership began in Fall 2008, community members identified education/workforce development as a top priority. That priority evolved to become a focus of Hart County Schools (HCS), incorporating science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) into K-12 classrooms, with a primary focus on grades 2-12.

To prepare teachers for project-based STEM instruction, Archway Partnership connected HCS to UGA’s College of Education and College of Engineering. Dr. Roger Hill, Dr. Tim Foutz, and Dr. Sid Thompson led a two-day professional development workshop for 45 HCS teachers to help set the stage for STEM’s Fall 2013 rollout. Dr. T.J. Kopcha and doctoral student, Lenie George, also conducted Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT) workshops for HCHS and Hart County Middle School (HCMS) faculty and students.

The Hart County High School (HCHS) STEM student cohort, made up of approximately 40 students, has been exposed to a myriad of UGA’s STEM resources. HCHS science and healthcare technology teachers are piloting innovative science learning software from IS3D, a company founded by faculty from UGA’s College of Veterinary Medicine and the College of Education. The partnership gives HCHS access to cutting-edge technology at no cost while providing IS3D with feedback for future development.

Student exposure to advanced technologies through this STEM initiative takes place both inside and outside of the classroom. Archway sponsored a hands-on workshop about building and programming electronics for STEM students and teachers as part of the SparkFun Electronics, Inc., National Tour. Additionally, the HCHS STEM cohort visited UGA campus. They toured UGA’s campus, seeing labs and learning about microscopy in the Center for Advanced Ultrastructural Research and the Odum School of Ecology.

Looking ahead, Archway has connected HCMS to UGA College of Education instructor Dr. Gretchen Thomas, and the two are forging a partnership. Thomas has developed an outreach effort called Discovery Dawgs, which partners UGA undergraduates with HCMS technology students around STEM enrichment activities. Implementation is planned for fall 2014 as part of the continued UGA and HCS partnership around STEM education.

**Advancing Community Priorities:** STEM activities are a perfect fit for Hart County Schools. In 2008, the Hart County Archway Partnership Executive Committee identified education as a top priority because it is a cornerstone for economic development. Specific areas of focus include support for bring your own technology (BYOT), STEM enrichment and resources, career academy planning efforts, and helping to prepare students for life after high school.