Diversity Matters in Informal STEM Experiences

Abstract:

Differences in gender and ethnicity affect interest in STEM careers. It is important for society to have diversity in STEM fields because of the different perspectives and unique solutions to problems each individual brings to the situation. The purpose of the project is to examine the effects of informal learning experiences that increase STEM interest in a diverse secondary student population. Students participated in a summer STEM camp, and teachers participated in professional development directly related to the activities and experiences in the student camp. Those experiences gave teachers additional teaching methodologies and strategies to engage a more diverse student population in STEM content. The pre- and post-test results showed an increase in interest in STEM subjects and careers. Informal experiences can increase interest in STEM fields and result in promoting diversity in the STEM workforce.