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Robotics Training Partnership Expands STEM Opportunities Across Southern Minnesota

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Through strong partnerships and innovative professional learning opportunities, South Central Service Cooperative (SCSC) is helping expand access to robotics and STEM education for students across southern Minnesota.

Educators from several SCSC member districts recently participated in Minnesota State University, Mankato's Rural Experiential STEM Education Partnership Initiative (RESEPI) Train-the-Trainers program. The two-week professional learning experience prepares teachers to bring robotics education directly into their classrooms, providing students with hands-on learning opportunities that build technical skills while introducing them to high-demand career pathways.

Participants received immersive instruction in robotics programming, robot assembly, coding, troubleshooting, and classroom implementation strategies. Upon completing the program, schools receive robotics equipment and instructional resources that enable educators to integrate robotics into existing coursework and expand Career and Technical Education opportunities for students.

The Train-the-Trainers model focuses on building sustainable capacity by equipping educators with the knowledge and resources needed to lead robotics instruction within their own schools. This approach allows districts to continue growing STEM programming while reaching more students each year.

According to reporting by the *Mankato Free Press*, the RESEPI program has expanded significantly since its pilot year, growing from three participating school districts to include schools across southern Minnesota, including several SCSC member districts.

Through this continued growth, hundreds of students will gain opportunities to explore robotics, engineering, coding, and problem-solving skills that prepare them for future careers.

As Travis Thul, Vice President of Student Success and Engagement at Minnesota State University, Mankato, told the *Mankato Free Press*:

"What we're doing is increasing accessibility to STEM education across Minnesota. We are providing teachers with the hands-on experience they need to bring advanced education into their schools."

Robotics education provides students with far more than technical knowledge. Through hands-on experiences, students develop collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills while applying concepts from science, technology, engineering, and mathematics in meaningful ways. These experiences also expose students to career opportunities in advanced manufacturing, engineering, automation, information technology, and other high-demand industries.

Programs like RESEPI align closely with SCSC's commitment to expanding high-quality Career and Technical Education opportunities throughout the region. By investing in educator training and fostering partnerships with higher education and industry leaders, SCSC helps schools provide engaging learning experiences that prepare students for success in college, careers, and the evolving workforce.

As technology continues to transform today's workforce, initiatives like RESEPI ensure that educators have the tools and knowledge needed to inspire the next generation of innovators, problem-solvers, and skilled professionals.

Source Acknowledgment: Information for this story was gathered from Minnesota State University, Mankato's RESEPI program and reporting by the *Mankato Free Press*.

Interested in bringing RESEPI to your district? Contact Gwenn Wolters (gwolters@mncsc.org) to learn more.