Apple Valley High School wins national STEM Excellence Award

ROSEMOUNT, Minn. – Apple Valley High School received the 2019 STEM Excellence Award in the high school category at the national Future of Education Technology Conference in Orlando Jan. 30. The award recognizes schools for their innovative approaches to implementing science, technology, engineering and math education.

“This is tremendous recognition for our school and our program,” said teacher Jim Lynch, who oversees Apple Valley’s E3 STEM program. “It affirms the work we are doing and the opportunities we are providing students to explore STEM learning and career possibilities.”

In 2014, District 196 received nearly $3 million through a federal Youth CareerConnect grant from the U.S. departments of education and labor. The grant supported the establishment of the E3 STEM program, focusing on exploration, education and employment. Through partnerships with businesses and colleges, the program has expanded students’ opportunities for hands-on learning and exposure to career pathways in STEM-related fields. Students are able to earn college credits in some of their coursework and experience real-world learning through internships with business partners like SFM Mutual, Thomson Reuters and Uponor.

The grant also funded creation of Apple Valley's fabrication lab, or “fab lab,” which has equipment and machines that give students the ability to design and make almost anything they can imagine.

“The fab lab has played a key role in helping us establish our ‘STEM for All’ philosophy by integrating its use into an increasing number of our courses,” Lynch said. “Learning becomes so much more authentic when students can design and produce products that can be used by others in the real world.”

The fab lab and the school’s commitment to providing opportunities for all students were main factors in the judges’
District 196 provides boundless opportunities and infinite possibilities for more than 28,000 students in early childhood, K-12 and adult education programs, as well as community education programs for lifelong learners of all ages. District 196 serves more than 150,000 residents in Rosemount, Apple Valley, Eagan, Burnsville, Coates, Inver Grove Heights, Lakeville and Empire and Vermillion townships in Dakota County, Minnesota. For more information, visit www.District196.org.