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PATRICK ADMINISTRATION PROVIDES STEM LEARNING DAY FOR EARLY EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS

STURBRIDGE – In keeping with the Patrick Administration's commitment to enhancing Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education in the Commonwealth, the Department of Early Education and Care yesterday hosted a learning day for early childhood professionals to increase their knowledge of STEM subjects and pedagogical skills for teaching STEM to young children.

The "STEM Education from the Start" conference at the Sturbridge Host Hotel and Conference Center provided early educators, administrators, assistants, coaches and mentors with professional development sessions that were designed to increase their capacity to engage and educate young children in STEM areas. Approximately 300 professionals attended the learning day.

The conference included opening remarks by Early Education and Care Commissioner Thomas L. Weber, and a keynote address by Allison Scheff, Executive Director of STEM at the Department of Higher Education and liaison to the Governor's STEM Advisory Council, on "The STEM Plan 2.0 and its Connection to Early Childhood: Let's Start at the Beginning".

Session topics included robotics, early childhood science, weaving together literacy with engineering practices, how to become mathematical thinkers, how museums and libraries support early STEM education, engineering a story and aligning curriculum with the new MA standards for science and engineering/technology.

The STEM learning day for early education professionals was an effort to implement Governor Deval Patrick's STEM Plan 2.0: "Expanding the Pipeline for All: Massachusetts' Plan for Excellence in STEM Education," which outlines strategies for positioning the Commonwealth as a leader in the 21st century innovation-based global economy through STEM education. The Plan's goals include increasing student interest in STEM areas and increasing the percentage of skilled educators who teach Pre-K-16 STEM classes.

"Exploration, discovery and inquiry are natural stages of children's early learning. It makes perfect sense to engage children's interest and awareness of STEM-related topics in their preschool years," said Early Education and Care Commissioner Weber. "Our early educators are well-positioned to help build the next generation of our state's STEM workforce, so supporting their STEM knowledge is critical."

Massachusetts, which has been recognized by the National Governor's Association's Center for Best Practices, Change the Equation and Innovate+Education as a top STEM state, annually hosts a STEM Summit for Pre-K through Higher Education professionals across the Commonwealth to review the state's progress, discuss STEM Plan 2.0 and explore how to best expand interest in and opportunity for growth in the STEM fields.