

STEM Interest and Achievement on the *Iowa Assessments*

Research on STEM and achievement at the University of Iowa has focused on the connection between (1) student interest in science and math careers and (2) achievement in science and math. This research study consisted of over 168,000 students in Grades 3-11 who were enrolled in Iowa schools in 2013-2014. Key findings in middle school include:

Interest in STEM remains high in middle school. Approximately 85% of Iowa students in middle school expressed a moderate or high interest in STEM. This level of interest is encouraging and findings also suggest students remained interested in STEM fields throughout high school.

Female interest in STEM lags behind those of males. Males are more likely than females to be interested in STEM throughout the middle school years. Approximately 91% of males and 80% of females are interested in STEM in middle school. Additionally, the proportion of males interested in STEM tends to remain fairly constant throughout middle school, while the proportion of females interested in STEM decreases slightly.

Achievement levels are highest when STEM interest is expressed. Students who expressed interest in STEM outperform students who expressed no interest in STEM, in both science and math. In addition, this trend for science increases over grades, indicating that gains made by students interested in STEM are greater than those made by students not interested in STEM.

