

**New Challenges & Next Steps**

*Conducting research in 16 different schools is daunting in terms of recruitment, school district IRB approvals, standardization, communication, and project management. We have retained additional project management assistance. This year is focused on finalizing participants, school approvals and pilot testing the interventions and research methods and instruments.*

**Equity**

*We prioritize BIPOC and lower income students and aspiring first generation college students in the selection of participating high schools and college partners. The decision to include, and combine, simulation workshops, project-based learning and mentoring is grounded in evidence that such high impact educational practices attract, engage and retain underserved students. When near-peer mentors and mentees are from similar backgrounds underrepresented in STEM, gains in interest and engagement should be more meaningful.*

**Lessons Learned & Insights Gained**

*In the first quarter of this project we are recruiting pilot schools, developing research instruments, and training partners in preparation for spring 2023 piloting of the En-ROADS energy simulation and project-based learning interventions and quantitative and qualitative research methods.*

The best prepared workforce will arise from interdisciplinary learning experiences where rigorous academic concepts meet real-world action in meaningful contexts that connect school and community and that clarify the values students bring to bear on knowledge and action

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**Employing Peer Mentoring to Empower Youth to Become 21st Century Energy Leaders**

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NSF Award Number​: 2147839 Dates: 2022 - 2025

Project type:​ Developing and Testing Innovations

Project Overview: This project fosters energy/climate-related STEM career knowledge and interest in diverse high school students in Minnesota through an engaging year-long experiential learning project that tests the effectiveness of near-peer mentors as STEM/energy education and career role models that enhance the STEM-relevant cognitive and social-emotional impacts of simulation- and project-based learning.