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### **Storytime STEM-packs™ in Iowa**

If you go to <https://storytimestem.com/blogs/project-highlights>, this is what you will read:

“Educators across Iowa are combining Storytime STEM-packs with Bee-Bot to develop STEM and computer science skills in PreK-2 students via children's literature. In an initiative funded by the Iowa Governor's STEM Advisory Council and their STEM Scale Up Program to enhance the STEM skills of Iowa students, Iowa educators apply for grants to purchase Storytime STEM-Packs for their classes and libraries. Terrapin partners with Storytime STEM-packs to include Bee-Bots in Storytime STEM Adventures. Storytime STEM-packs are based on a popular children's book and contain all the materials needed for a variety of STEM activities to bring the story to life.”

Storytime STEM-packs is the STEM-capacity-building program for educators and librarians as well as the packaged product of the Allegheny Intermediate Unit Math & Science Collaborative, and Terrapin is the maker of Bee-Bots. “Bee-Bot's ease-of-use allows even the youngest students to develop coding skills while teachers can use the motivation Bee-Bot inspires to enhance teaching subjects across the curriculum. Terrapin began in 1979 to offer the Logo computer language, the very first coding app for kids, and its accompanying ‘turtle robot.’ Over the years, Terrapin has updated and enhanced Logo and expanded its robot offerings to reach every grade level.”

With Iowa, Storytime Stem-packs has gone national. It began in 2014 at Murrysville Community Library! It grew out of a partnership that was hatched by the Library and the AIU Math & Science Collaborative (MSC) during a planning conversation with Nancy Bunt, then Executive Director of the MSC, and this writer, then President of the MCL Board of Trustees. The then Executive Director of the Community Foundation of Westmoreland County answered my bid for funding the new project with an “only if you do it for two years instead of one.” I think that we all knew then how impactful this program could be.

The Team at the MSC, led by Mike Fierle, Program Director, and Gabriela Rose, Principal Investigator, has invented and grown this powerful tool for educators, those in schools and those in Libraries, into a wonderful vehicle for early, preK-2 learning. Having personally participated during the development, I can make this observation: it hit its stride when it offered Storytime STEM-packs+C beginning in 2019 under a PAsmart grant with those Bee-Bots at center stage. Children so young that you might think that they never could learn to deal with an algorithm, but they do. The simple scheme of having to direct a robot, a Bee-Bot, to go orthogonally on a board, such as one depicting the moon surface, and aiming for a spot on the board, is all that is required. A book about the moon ties the whole exercise and package into building reading capacity too.

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In November, for the first time of which I am aware, preK-2 Storytime STEM-packs programs were offered at Murrysville Community Library other than during the Summer Reading Club months. If your child missed out, check in with the Library to find out when you can give her/him the next opportunity for this great learning experience, especially for the Bee-Bot robot session. Iowans are doing it now, and you should too!

Charles B. Greenberg  
Board Director, Murrysville Community Library Foundation