

Sodexo Challenges Students Nationwide to Reduce Food Waste to Landfills with Spark 101 STEM Skills Video

Real-world case studies help students connect STEM coursework to environmental and sustainability career pathways

GAITHERSBURG, Md., January 04, 2017. With the support of [Sodexo](#), world leader in Quality of Life services, teachers nationwide now have a new resource specifically designed to help students explore applications of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) in real-world food waste and environmental sustainability challenges. Teachers are invited to use a new [Spark 101](#) STEM Skills Video to engage students in an example of authentic problem-solving based on actual challenges faced by employers. In [Sodexo's Spark 101 challenge](#), students are asked to apply their environmental science and analytical skills to help Sodexo's client reduce food waste typically sent to the landfill.

In 2015, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimated that while nearly 60,000 job openings become available in the U.S. annually, only 35,000 qualified graduates are projected to fill them. Of those openings:

- 50% will be in management and business
- 27% will be in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields
- 12% will be in education, communication, and governmental services
- 15% of the jobs will be in food and biomaterials production

Students who are passionate about global sustainability may be unaware of both the relevant career paths and the relationship between food waste and food service. With an eye toward increasing that awareness, Sodexo turned to Spark 101 to engage diverse students in STEM coursework and strengthen pathways to potential careers in these fields.

“Spark 101 STEM skills videos use a format proven to be effective in schools. An independent evaluation found that they increase STEM career awareness and skills, with significant positive effects on STEM engagement among students,” said Sodexo's CEO for Schools in North America, Stephen Dunmore. “Surveys also showed that 80 percent of students want teachers to integrate case study challenges into classwork and want employers to provide more case studies.”

In 2016, Sodexo awarded the nonprofit a grant to increase STEM engagement for 20,000 students through Spark 101's free, short, career-based case study videos connecting high school coursework to STEM careers, specifically those in food service and sustainability.

"Each year four million students graduate high school without having had an opportunity to tackle a real-world problem. And employers need options other than internships to introduce students to viable careers and critical skills," said Jane Kubasik, founder and president of the 114th Partnership. "We are very excited to add Sodexo's real workplace challenges to our library to help more learners connect passions to facilities management and food service career pathways while cultivating the necessary STEM skills to drive future innovation."

Spark 101 STEM skills videos, presented by employers like Sodexo, use an online interactive video format to let students work on real challenges faced by professionals in business, government, nonprofit, and academic institutions. The 10-minute classroom videos—co-developed by educators, employers, and Spark 101 design experts—engage students in authentic STEM problem solving, aligned to curriculum and educational standards for easy classroom integration. Secondary teachers can access more than 50 free Spark 101 STEM skills videos and curriculum-aligned teaching materials online at www.spark101.org.

Spark 101 is a program of the 114th Partnership, a national nonprofit that helps students navigate education and career pathways. By connecting classwork to professional pathways, the organization will equip one million students with the knowledge they need to connect their personal passions to high opportunity careers.

Sodexo delivers more than 100 services across North America that enhance organizational performance, contribute to local communities and improve quality of life. The Fortune Global 500 company is a leader in delivering sustainable, integrated facilities management and foodservice operations.

Learn more about Sodexo at its corporate blog, [Sodexo Insights](#).

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