1. Tell us a little about your background. What brought you into the world of STEM education?

(Here he can briefly share your career path—whether it's teaching, industry experience, policy, etc.)

My journey into STEM education started in the classroom, where I spent years as a math, technology, CTE teacher, and robotics coach. I've always been passionate about helping students connect what they're learning to real-world applications, and STEM offered the perfect avenue for that. Over time, I moved into leadership roles, including serving as the Senior Director of School Engagement at Project Lead The Way, Executive Director of the ATU STEM Institute, and working on the board of SciMathMN. Through these experiences, I worked with schools across the country to implement hands-on, transformative STEM programs, build partnerships, and impact policy and legislation to create opportunities for youth.

What's kept me in this field is the incredible potential STEM has to open doors for students—especially when we create inclusive, engaging pathways that reflect the world they'll enter after graduation. Whether it's through robotics competitions, engineering challenges, or community partnerships, I've seen firsthand how STEM can ignite curiosity and build confidence. That's what brought me here—and what continues to drive me every day.

2. What excites you most about joining the Southeast Service Cooperative?

(Opportunity to highlight collaboration, innovation, and community impact.)

The Minnesota Southeast Service Cooperative has a strong reputation for innovation and community-driven impact, and I'm thrilled to be part of that mission. In this new role I am very excited to support the work of SciMathMN, STEM Forward, and career connections in collaboration with the Career Connected Learning team at the SSC.

I'm especially looking forward to helping expand access to high-quality STEM experiences—whether that's through professional development, regional partnerships, or hands-on learning opportunities that spark curiosity and build future-ready skills. Being able to support schools in a more direct and localized way, while also bringing in broader insights from my work at the national level with higher education, non-profits, state departments, and industry partners, feels like the perfect intersection of my experience and passion.

3. You’re also serving as the Executive Director of SciMathMN. What’s the mission of that organization, and how does it connect to your work in southeast Minnesota?

SciMathMN is a statewide nonprofit focused on advancing STEM education through policy, advocacy, and strategic partnerships. Their mission is to ensure that every student in Minnesota has access to high-quality STEM learning that prepares them for the future—whether that’s college, career, or community engagement.

What makes this role especially meaningful is how closely it aligns with my work in southeast Minnesota. Through the Minnesota Southeast Service Cooperative, I’m able to work directly with schools and educators to implement programs and support systems that reflect the broader goals of SciMathMN. It’s a powerful synergy—connecting statewide vision with regional action. Whether it’s advocating for equitable access to STEM resources or supporting teachers with professional development, both roles allow me to help build a stronger, more connected STEM ecosystem across Minnesota.

4. What do you think is the biggest opportunity for STEM education in our region right now?

One of the biggest opportunities we have right now is to build stronger connections between classroom learning and local industry. Southeast Minnesota is home to a diverse range of employers—from advanced manufacturing and healthcare to agriculture and renewable energy—and each of these sectors offers real-world contexts that can make STEM learning more relevant and inspiring for students.

By creating more partnerships between schools and local businesses, we can give students hands-on experiences, mentorship opportunities, and a clearer sense of the career pathways available right in their own communities. It’s also a chance to help educators bring industry-aligned skills into their teaching, whether through curriculum, professional development, or collaborative projects.

Another exciting opportunity is expanding access to STEM for all students, especially in rural and underserved areas. With the right supports—like mobile science labs, regional events, and virtual opportunities—we can ensure that every student has the chance to explore, create, and innovate.

5. And the biggest challenge?

(This helps ground you in the local context and shows he's thinking critically.)

One of the biggest challenges we face in southeast Minnesota—and really across much of the state—is ensuring equitable access to high-quality STEM education, especially in our rural and underserved communities. There's incredible talent and potential in every corner of our region, but not every student has the same opportunities when it comes to resources, technology, or exposure to STEM careers.

We also see challenges around workforce alignment. While there are many great STEM jobs in our region, students don't always see the connection between what they're learning in school and the opportunities available to them locally. Bridging that gap requires stronger partnerships between education and industry, as well as more intentional career-connected learning experiences.

Finally, supporting and retaining STEM educators is a critical challenge. Teachers are the heart of this work, and we need to make sure they have the tools, training, and support to keep innovating and inspiring students. That is what is so exciting about the work here at the SSC. This work all comes together, and through the work of the many programs at SSC, these connections can be made and result in opportunities for families, students, and teachers in one place. Can you tell I am excited about the work?

6. What are your goals for the STEM Forward network in your first year?

(Great way to give readers a preview of what to expect or how they might engage.)

In my first year, my top priority is listening—really learning from the incredible educators, partners, and stakeholders who make up the STEM Forward network. There's so much wisdom and innovation already happening across southeast Minnesota, and I want to make sure we're building on that foundation in a way that's collaborative and responsive to local needs.

My goals include strengthening connections between schools and regional industries, expanding access to high-quality STEM experiences for all students, and creating more opportunities for educators to share best practices and grow professionally. I also want to elevate student voice—making sure young people are part of the conversation as we shape the future of STEM in our region.

Ultimately, I see STEM Forward as a hub for connection, inspiration, and action. By working together and learning from one another, we can create a more vibrant, equitable, and future-ready STEM ecosystem across southeast Minnesota.

7. How can educators, city/county staff, and other partners get involved or support your work?

There are so many meaningful ways to get involved, and it all starts with connection. Whether you're an educator, a city or county leader, or a community partner, your insights and experiences are incredibly valuable to shaping the future of STEM in our region.

One of the best ways to support this work is by joining the STEM Forward network. It's a space where we can share ideas, collaborate on initiatives, and build partnerships that benefit students and communities. I also encourage folks to reach out directly—whether it's to explore a potential project, offer feedback, or simply start a conversation about how STEM can support local goals.

We're especially interested in learning from stakeholders across the region. What's working in your community? What challenges are you facing? How can we align STEM education with local workforce needs and economic development? The more we listen and learn from each other, the stronger and more responsive our efforts will be.

Ultimately, this is a team effort. By working together, we can create opportunities that are not only innovative but also deeply rooted in the strengths and needs of southeast Minnesota.

8. Can you share a favorite STEM learning moment—either from your own school years or something you've witnessed as an educator or leader?

One of my favorite STEM moments happened during a regional robotics competition where I helped coach. A team of my middle school students had been struggling with their robot all season. They were frustrated, tired, and ready to give up for the day. But during one of the final matches, something clicked—they made a last-minute adjustment to their robot's code and mechanism, and it worked. The robot completed the autonomous mode perfectly, and the entire team erupted in celebration and were in tears.

What made that moment so powerful wasn't just the success—it was the resilience, the collaboration, and the real-world problem-solving that got them there. You could see the confidence shift in those students. They realized they could do hard things and that failure was just part of the process. They didn't come home with the trophy, but what they did come home with was so much more valuable.

Moments like that remind me why STEM education matters. It's not just about content—it's about empowering students to think critically, work together, and believe in their ability to shape the future. I am proud to report that each and every one of them are doing just that as adults today, in their way.

9. Outside of work, what do you like to do for fun or relaxation?

(Adds a human, personal touch—great for relatability.)

Outside of work, my greatest joy comes from spending time with my family. My wife and I have four amazing boys—ages 13, 10, 8, and 3—and they keep us on our toes in the best way possible! We love sharing our passion for the outdoors with them, whether it's hiking, biking, camping, or just exploring new parks together. Sports are also a big part of our family life—whether we're cheering from the sidelines, coaching, or playing together in the backyard.

For me, those moments—watching my kids discover something new, seeing them work together as a team, or just laughing around a campfire—are what it's all about. They remind me why I care so deeply about education and the opportunities it provides. It's not just about preparing students for the future—it's about helping them thrive in the present, too.

**10. Lightning Round!

Favorite STEM topic: Building Transformational Experiences (These are when you know we are onto something great!!!)

Book or podcast recommendation: **Growin' Up! —Discover dream jobs!**

Lingokids: Growin' Up! —Discover dream jobs! - Apple Podcasts

🍋⚓ We're serving up one of our tastiest episodes in a fun-sized, three-part mini series! Join Emily and Luis on an exciting ocean adventure—one mini voyage at a time—as they uncover the surprising power of food and nutrition.In these bite-sized episodes, you'll discover how lemons once saved a ship's crew, explore the science behind healthy eating, and meet special guest Kacie ...

podcasts.apple.com

Science Cafe podcast

[Science Café: Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence | University of Michigan Museum of Natural History Podcast]

What is machine learning? Is it the same as artificial intelligence? Please join Raed Al Kontar of the U-M Department of Industrial & Operations Engineering to discuss how machine learning algorithms can be applied to distributed systems such as cars, phones, and hospitals, where data comes from many sources.

umnaturalhistory.podbean.com

Go-to coffee order: Tall and Dark

One word to describe yourself:** Collaborative