

## K-12 Partnership Highlight: Steelcase, Inc.

Steelcase is a United States-based furniture company founded in 1912 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. With locations across the world, Steelcase is the global leader in office furniture, architectural and technology products for office environments and the education, health care and retail industries.

Together Steelcase and Beyond Benign envision a world where all scientists enter the workforce armed with the skills necessary to design sustainable technologies that protect human health and the environment. Beginning in 2014, Beyond Benign partnered with Steelcase scientists and designers to develop curriculum units, labs and lessons highlighting 3 different Steelcase green chemistry and sustainability innovations:

- **Ecovative:** Mushroom Materials as a replacement for Styrofoam in packaging, insulation and more. Students can “grow” their own materials and test the performance.
- **Sharklet films:** A new approach to antimicrobials through the prevention of bacteria growth based on the surface chemistry of shark scales.
- **Cogent:** Safer dye chemistry in the manufacturing of textiles without the use of cancer causing antimony.

The curriculum units have become central to many of the professional development workshops that Beyond Benign offers.

During the summer of 2016, Beyond Benign hosted a teacher workshop at Steelcase University to highlight the new units and bring teachers from the greater Grand Rapids, MI area to learn more about how the company approaches sustainability through innovation. In 2017, Beyond Benign is working on curricular adaptations of the units for the middle school level and will provide an additional workshop at Steelcase University for middle school teachers in the Grand Rapids, MI region.

This continued partnership includes reaching over 144 teachers and 355 students in the first year of the program, and providing curriculum and materials for over 500 teachers. The curriculum units have also been adapted for green chemistry outreach, reaching over 3,000 students, educators and community members annually.