



Working to create critical thinkers and empower the next generation of innovators.

LASER eNewsletter

October 2016

Greetings!

At LASER, we think the purpose of science and STEM education is three-fold: 1) increasing the number and diversity of U.S. students who pursue advanced degrees and careers in STEM, 2) expanding the STEM-capable workforce, and 3) enhancing STEM literacy for all our citizens.

In its 2006 news journal, [Natural Selections](#), BSCS compared the preparation of students for a 21st-century workforce to growing a garden. Even a decade later, we believe this BSCS metaphor is still appropriate. BSCS suggested the critical importance of the vertical alignment between the purpose, policies, programs and practices for any improvement initiative, including those that focus on science/STEM education. In its news journal, BSCS articulated three examples of how school district-led efforts focused on vertical alignment can result in 1) high-quality content and curriculum, 2) high-quality teachers and teaching, and 3) high-quality tests and assessments.

If you, regardless of your role and responsibilities in the science/STEM education ecosystem agree, then we urge you to advocate for system-led efforts that are intentional in nature and enable the vertical alignment of purpose, policy, program and practice to improve curriculum, teaching and assessment, all in the service of student learning.

As you consider your own effort to vertically align these elements of your system, we encourage you to read and ponder the following stories related to national, state and local efforts in science and STEM education.

On a personal note, I want to let readers of this newsletter know that I will be retiring in December 2016, thus ending my service as Co-Director of Washington State LASER. It has been my distinct honor and privilege to have served in this role since LASER was launched in Washington State in 1999. Thank you for your friendship and support of our collective effort to improve science and STEM education during the past 18 years.

Best Regards,
Jeff

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Did You Know?

Increased credits in science are part of the state's new high school graduation requirements. Visit the Washington State Board of Education's [page](#) on this topic to learn more and to see answers to Frequently Asked Questions.

Funding from Every Student Succeeds Act

Late last year, Congress replaced the *No Child Left Behind* legislation with the new *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA). In ESSA, many individual programs (including the Math Science Partnerships) were combined into a single block grant program, called *Student Support and Academic Enrichments Grants* (Title IV, Part A of the ESSA).

The intent of the program is to have funds flow through the states to districts, based on how much Title I funding each district receives. How much money will be available for each district will be determined in the next federal budget, which is supposed to start in October.

This is a key program that can fund STEM-related efforts at the school district level. But the funds can support many other subject areas, such as college and career counseling, arts, civics, access to IB/AP, comprehensive school mental health, drug and violence prevention, and health and physical education. This means that if you want the funds to be spent on STEM learning, it will be critical to identify the person who manages the funds in your school district.

For more information, read this document about [Title IV, Part A](#) prepared by the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) and the National Science Education Leadership Association (NSELA).



Senator Patty Murray at the signing of the Every Student Succeeds Act by President Barack Obama

Federal Grant Opportunities for STEM Education

On April 13, 2016 coincident with the sixth and final White House Science Fair of the Obama Administration, the U.S. Department of Education released a *Dear Colleague Letter* to states, school districts, schools and education partners on how to maximize federal funds to support and enhance innovative STEM education for all students.

The letter references formula grant programs in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins). It also references several of the Department's competitive grant programs. Since STEM is a priority across over 60 formula and discretionary grant programs, the Dear Colleague Letter is intended to provide a 'road map' as well as examples for states, school districts, and other education organizations on the many ways they can use existing Federal funds to advance STEM and Computer Science learning for students in grades Pre-K-12. To learn more about these opportunities, please read the [letter](#).

2017 STEM Education Leadership Institute - June 26-30

Applications for the 2017 STEM Education Leadership Institute will be available November 1, 2016. Visit our [website](#) for more information on the Institute, to learn qualities of successful teams and to hear from previous participants.

If your school, district or regional team would like to be notified when the application is posted, let us [know](#).

Upcoming Washington State LASER Events

November 15-17 - *Assessing the NGSS: Rethinking Formative and Summative Assessments (Spokane)*

January 25 - *STEM Institute Follow Up Meeting (Seattle)*

February 8 - *STEM Institute Follow Up Meeting (Pasco)*

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