



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

## LASER eNewsletter

## Special Edition

Greetings!

With this special edition of our LASER eNewsletter, we recognize the immeasurable contributions of Washington State LASER Co-Director Jeff Estes, who retired at the end of 2016. We hope that you enjoy reading about his impact from his colleagues and peers who have worked with him since LASER's inception. Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) has named [Evangalina Galvan Shreeve their new Director of STEM Education and Outreach](#). We look forward to collaborating with Ms. Shreeve as we continue to improve science and STEM education across Washington.

## Sonia Siegel Vexler

I met Jeff many years before Washington State LASER was formed. He was at the Hanford Science Museum and I was establishing a hands-on outreach program for Snohomish County Public Utility District. I flew to Richland to learn from Jeff what successful programs looked like. He was gracious and unassuming



Throughout the years our paths crossed at science education meetings. I really got to know Jeff when I became part of the Washington State LASER Leadership Team. As I worked with Jeff I learned new things about him. He is a visionary. He is an innovator. He forces you to think and to think outside the box. He is a deep thinker. He is highly respected. He challenges your thoughts but always in a nice way. He can edit a paper like no one else. His job is not defined by work hours. He is nationally recognized for his work in science and STEM education. He created a roadmap with multiple routes by which schools and districts would be able to be successful in science and STEM education. In many ways, Jeff was the glue that held the Leadership Team together with his passion for highly effective trained teachers and students having the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in school and in life.

It was my pleasure and honor to be co-director of Washington State LASER with Jeff Estes. He is a friend who has strengthened and advanced STEM education in our state and in our nation.

## Dennis Schatz

If you've worked with Jeff, you know he is usually not the first person to speak up in a meeting. When he does speak up, he has thoughtfully considered multiple sides of the conversation and speaks based on evidence. He is who you want on your team.

If you've worked with Jeff, you know he does not move from one educational fad to another. He is persistent. He looks to see what is effective in existing programs, yet is nimble enough in his thinking to incorporate new strategies when they prove their efficacy. He is who you want on your team.

If you've worked with Jeff, you know how considerate he is of others. He listens to make sure he understands others' perspectives, before presenting his views. He is who you want on your

team.

If you've worked with Jeff, you know his name doesn't have to be at the top of the list. He makes sure recognition goes to those who do the majority of the work. He is who you want on your team.

I have had the honor to work with Jeff for more than 25 years, and know that his thoughtful, persistent, considerate and humble nature will be missed by me and all the people associated with the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, Washington State LASER, the State of Washington, and by all the other individuals who have interacted with him over his long career as a STEM educator and leader.



## Peggy Willcuts

Can you imagine a catalyst so powerful that it changes the lives of students, educators, and the community all across a region? Jeff Estes is that catalyst. In the Mid-Columbia region (SE Washington), he has helped create quite an impact. About 5 years ago, he was given the charge by his boss at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory to identify a Big Hairy Audacious Goal (BHAG) that would fill gaps in equitable access to high-quality STEM education offerings for students, educators, and the community. He gathered a willing team of folks who believed in the vision. They came from formal and informal education at the K-12 and higher education levels. Others joined in from business and industry and together they created the [Mid-Columbia STEM Education Collaboratory](#) - a model for addressing localized STEM education and workforce challenges. Because a key tenet of the Collaboratory is the belief that organizations with a common vision can accomplish more by working in concert with one another, to date they have created 50+ new STEM learning opportunities; increased the capacity of K-12 educators and community leaders in both [computer science literacy](#) and [Family Engineering](#) while also providing public access to over 100 field-tested and documented [tools for teaching STEM](#).



And it all started with Jeff Estes, the consummate catalyst...

## Ellen Ebert

I first met Jeff Estes when I came to Washington state in 2010 as the Learning and Teaching Science Director at OSPI. From the very first moment that I met Jeff, I knew that I was with a person who was dedicated, passionate, and keenly interested in science education for teachers and students in our state.

Jeff tutored me about LASER. He tutored me on the change process (hope isn't a strategy). He tutored me on vision and progress of science education as it developed across Washington over the last 15 years.

When we were writing and reviewing the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), Jeff was

instrumental in helping pull together resources across the state to support teachers in the process of doing the review. As a precursor to adoption of the NGSS, Jeff presented to the State Board of Education emphasizing the importance of the new standards as the critical foundation for STEM education in the 21st century. I cannot overstate his commitment and contribution to Washington's adoption and transition to the NGSS as Washington State Science Learning Standards (WSSLS).

To say that Jeff has had a handprint on science education probably does not capture the essence of who Jeff is and how much he has contributed to science education, to Washington teachers and school districts, and to institutions and organizations across the state and to those of us who have been privileged to work with him. And on top of that, Jeff is a really nice person! I have only known Jeff to be consistently optimistic and forward thinking. He has always been available by phone or in person to give time to listen and brainstorm.

I certainly will miss Jeff personally, but as the state science director, I will keenly miss his expertise and support.

### Jacob Clark Blickenstaff



I joined Washington State LASER just over three years ago, and that is where my time as a colleague and collaborator with Jeff Estes begins. I can say with confidence that no one is more dedicated to the cause of improving STEM education in Washington, and Jeff's actions over the last three decades are testament to that commitment. I have been the grateful recipient of many book recommendations (when does he find the time to read them all?) and learned more about the context and connections in the local education community from Jeff than from any other source. From Cape Flattery to Clarkston and from Vancouver to Coleville, kids in Washington have received better STEM education because of Jeff's work with LASER, PNNL, and the State Board of Education. I wish him all the best in his retirement, and look forward to carrying on the work he began.

### Georgia Boatman

As Jeff Estes embarks on the next great phase of his life, retirement, it feels appropriate to take a few minutes to reflect on his contributions to all of us in the Washington State science education network. Jeff has been a real leader for science education reform, being instrumental in bringing LASER to Washington and in guiding us as a network in developing a vision for how science education could and should look for all of our students and their teachers. Beyond that, Jeff has helped us to craft and execute a real and actionable plan for how to make that vision a reality. He has helped us, as a state, think about what quality instructional materials should be and how we can be sure they are available to all students. Even more importantly he has helped us to realize that quality instruction, supported by exemplary professional learning is the biggest contribution we can make to assuring that every student has a teacher that is prepared and excited to help their students learn in science and STEM. He has changed, in a fundamental way, what we all see as important and worthy in science and STEM education.

But let me give you a personal perspective as someone who he has influenced and mentored for the past 20 years. My guess is that many of you share this same perspective and experience of Jeff. In 1996 Jeff invited me, just a plain old elementary classroom teacher to participate in Science Alive at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. That invitation and the subsequent professional learning experiences he made possible have changed the trajectory of my career and, in fact of the way I view teaching and learning.

After Science Alive Jeff once again issued me an invitation to participate in a learning experience at PNNL, the Partnership for Arid Lands Stewardship (PALS). Again, my understanding of science and science teaching and learning grew. And again he gave me the opportunity to keep learning and deepening my expertise in the Department of Energy ACTS program, a 3 year program where a small cadre of elementary teachers worked directly with PNNL scientists to understand

the geology and biology of the shrub steppe and then write curriculum enhancements based on that learning. Jeff provided the opportunity and another life and career changer for me.

He was instrumental in my hiring as a Regional Science Coordinator at ESD 123 and, while he would say that was all me, I know it was because he went to bat for me, a plain old elementary classroom teacher. He saw something in me that I didn't see in myself. For that kind of vision I will always be grateful. Jeff often says that he learns as much from me as I learn from him and that we are all learning together. I am not sure that this is entirely true but it is a gracious thing to say, nonetheless.

In my mind, that is Jeff's true gift and lasting contribution to us all. He sees not only the potential for excellence in the science education system, but he sees the potential for excellence in people. His ability to see the potential in each of us has moved science and STEM education forward, and has made us all better at this work.

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Funding for Washington State LASER provided by:



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