WASHINGTON STEM
2020 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY

Leadership Assistance for Science Education Reform

- State-wide science education program led by Washington STEM in partnership with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Educational Service Districts, Institute for Systems Biology. It was founded in 1999 as a public/private partnership and became a program of Washington STEM in 2017.
- Focuses on increasing high-quality science learning opportunities for students across the state by working with STEM education leaders and professional development networks.
- Overlaps and ties together many aspects of Washington's education systems, including Career Connect Washington, Climate Science, Computer Science, and Next Generation Science Standards.
- Uniquely positioned to effect change toward outcomes at the K- 12 level, with a focus on science and engineering, by providing leadership and assistance to school district leaders across the state.

We are advocating for a modest increase in funding to $700,000 from $356,000* to double the number of school districts served by LASER in helping with strategic planning and science leadership development. The increase in funding will roughly double the amount each LASER Alliance will receive to fund their programs across the state of Washington. Funding for LASER has remained stagnant for the last 9 years. Prior to the recession, LASER was funded at $4.079 million per year.

Adequately and equitably preparing students to access high-demand, family-wage career opportunities by improving their learning in science and STEM more broadly will only happen if we enhance the capacity of science educators *and* improve systems to more equitably support students— especially those underrepresented in STEM.

Through Washington State LASER, Washington STEM collaborates with the 10 LASER Alliances—a network of STEM and science education leaders across the state—to improve both systems and science and engineering instruction for thousands of educators who apply their learning to support tens of thousands of students, year after year.

2020 LASER GOALS:

Landscape: Give STEM education leaders the tools they need to support all students in science classrooms across the state.

Leadership Capacity and Coherence: Provide clear connections and access to resources for STEM education leaders so they can better support students.

Culture: Every student, rural, urban, and everywhere in between, will see STEM as a place for them.

*** SB6168 Sec520 (12a) and HB2325 Sec520 (12a)**

LASER IN ACTION:

Improving science/STEM learning outcomes for students requires changing practices and policies that act as systemic, institutional, and organizational barriers.

LASER is actively curating an online platform known as the "LASER toolbox" that contains resources designed for Science/STEM Strategic Planning & Implementation. LASER will support a minimum of 20 schools/districts, two per Alliance region, in comprehensive, equity-driven, data-based Science/STEM strategic planning and implementation.

The ability to assist districts to make sense of the myriad opportunities in STEM education requires that science education leaders are well-versed and aware of the wide range of state STEM initiatives and key players across the state.

LASER is assisting districts to identify and leverage efficiencies across initiatives in order to best serve students systematically underrepresented in STEM, aligned to the Washington School Improvement Framework and complementary strategic planning efforts.

Overcoming barriers to success for underrepresented and underserved students requires that leaders be culturally competent and proficient. LASER is developing cultural proficiency within its leadership network, and will also support the development of those competencies with other regional, district, and school leaders.

LASER: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is LASER a new program?
No. For 20 years LASER has been supported by the Washington State Legislature as a budget proviso to act as a platform science education leadership across the state. Washington STEM has collaborated with Alliance Directors, OSPI, and an Advisory group to update the focus of LASER since assuming responsibility for the proviso three years ago.

Why did funding for LASER go down? When?
LASER funding began to drop in 2009 when the recession began to impact Washington state.

LASER is new to me, why haven't I heard of it in the past?
As a systems-oriented program with modest funding, LASER hasn't garnered much public attention outside of the science education community since 2009. You may have heard of LASER's impact by another name, whether it's the regional science materials co-operatives in South Central, Southeast, and Northwest regions, the strategic planning workshops in Southwest or Northeast, or the science leadership collaborative network in Puget Sound. All of these successful programs grew out of—and still leverage—LASER's work.

Does LASER add on an additional burden for teachers?
Fortunately, no. In many cases, teachers are earning their required professional learning clock hours through LASER, so it's not an add-on. Instead, by participating in LASER, teachers are able to meet their professional development requirements, while accessing and participating in high-quality, impactful learning.

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