



WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

OLD CAPITOL BUILDING • ROOM 253 • P.O. Box 47206 • 600 S.E. WASHINGTON • OLYMPIA, WA 98504-7206

NEW STEM HIGH SCHOOL IN TRICITIES

BACKGROUND:

The STEM High School is a collaboration, between Battelle, Washington State University Tri-Cities, as well as the Richland, Kennewick, and Pasco School Districts.

The school will be a small school that is highly personalized, attracts a broad spectrum of students, and immerses them in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics focused learning experiences. The team is creating an environment through partnerships that connect academic learning beyond the walls of the classroom. We want to teach and have students learn in a way that parallels how scientists, engineers, and mathematicians conduct inquiries, solve problems, and expand knowledge. We want to prepare students for post-secondary education, careers, and citizenship.

The school's objectives are as follow:

- Create new learning opportunities for a broad spectrum of students.
- Use a model for teaching and learning that is research based, rigorous and relevant, and sustained through professional development plan.
- Implement a performance-based curriculum that focuses on inquiry-centered, problem-based learning with cross-disciplinary connections, and relevant STEM learning experiences.
- Engage all students through technology.
- Use a student-centered teaching approach.

We are in the planning stages of the project, with an anticipated opening date of August 2009. We have put together a core planning team (made up of educators, scientists and engineers, university faculty, and other community/industry partners) which are in the process of designing the core curriculum sequence and develop a supportive professional development plan.

Other important points about this project include:

The STEM school will not be designed solely for advanced science and math students, but will serve students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and interest areas throughout the Tri-Cities.

Science literacy is not just about creating the next generation of scientists and engineers; and serving as a precursor to feeding the nation's 'innovation pipeline.' Science literacy is needed by everyone who lives in today's technological world. The STEM curriculum provides a strong academic foundation that can be used to solve complex problems, both inside and out of the scientific and technological realms.

The STEM school will be particularly appealing to students who seek a highly personalized, small-school approach to learning, where academic subjects are connected, and to students who wish to engage in learning beyond the school walls.

The school will not be a competitor with current programs, but rather will be another option for Tri-Cities area students.

The school will reinforce our community's image as a science and technology center, perhaps contributing to economic development.

We believe this school will serve as a model that could be replicated elsewhere in the state.

EXPECTED ACTION:

None