STEM Network May Meeting Highlights: Budget Shortfall and Advocacy for Science Education

The STEM Network held its May meeting on Wednesday May 17th, addressing various updates and initiatives. The meeting covered the revised state revenue forecast, educator workforce challenges, and the role of organizations in supporting STEM education. Additionally, regional updates highlighted efforts in marketing STEM programs and the expansion of STEM ecosystems.

Addressing Educator Workforce Challenges, Revised State Revenue Forecast, and Budget Shortfall:
Jessica Sawko, the Statewide STEM Network Director provided updates around state and legislative matters. One key takeaway was the acknowledgment that the state's economy had underperformed since the release of the Governor's Budget proposal in January. This forced the Administration to recognize a substantial budget shortfall of $31.5 billion, an increase of $9.3 billion since January 2023. The shortfall primarily resulted from a reduction in general fund revenues by $8.5 billion and a combined decrease of $14.7 billion in personal income taxes for both years. The revised forecast did not include any specific provisions for STEM-related initiatives. Sawko also covered state updates related to challenges faced by participants in the Teacher Residency program. Specifically, the Administration suggested increasing grants to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) from $25,000 to $40,000 per resident. This increase in grant funds would require LEAs to provide a minimum living stipend of $20,000 to residents, addressing the issue of minimal or no stipends during their residency.

Learning Recovery Block Grant Reduction:
Unfortunately, the Learning Recovery Block Grant, which had previously provided funding for various educational purposes, including educator professional learning, faced a proposed reduction of $2.5 billion. This reduction, allocated on an equity formula in the 2021/2022 budget, diminishes the importance of supporting education recovery efforts.

PLEASE JOIN US

CA STEM Network
Meeting June 6, 2023
@ 2:00 pm
Register Here

Community Resources for Science:
Teresa Barnett from Community Resources for Science showcased the organization's 25 years of impact. Their focus on STEM equity, fostering belonging, and climate and environmental literacy resonated with the attendees. Barnett highlighted how they directly support teachers through professional development, coaching, and connecting them to local resources. One of their successful strategies involves connecting K-8 teachers and students with actual scientists, STEM professionals, and customized resources. Barnett emphasized the need for STEM equity, especially considering the pre-pandemic statistics indicating that only one-third of California students were proficient in science. Even more concerning was the fact that fewer than one-fifth of Latinx, Black, low-income, and English language learner students achieved proficiency. To address this, Barnett stressed the importance of the "YOU Belong in STEM" messaging, which has gained traction regionally and nationally as a means of encouraging participation. Furthermore, the organization's Joyful Math and Science Project, modeled after the success of English Language Arts, aims to foster joyful learning, inclusion, belonging, and cultural connections to daily life.

In addition to their other program updates, Barnett highlighted the fact that teachers in their district have been expressing a growing need for support in teaching climate change and environmental justice. Despite the absence of climate change discussions in elementary standards, students and educators are eager for these topics to be incorporated into the curriculum. Barnett shared several resources with the group, including the 2023 Champions of Discovery Celebration Video.

Regional Updates and Future Meetings:
During the meeting, participants discussed the Ecosystem's recent gathering of the STEM Learning Ecosystems Community of Practice convened by TIES in Jacksonville, Florida. The teams reflected on spending some time rethinking marketing strategies to attract children to STEM programs. The next STEM Ecosystem meeting is scheduled to take place in Chicago.

Also notable in terms of STEM Ecosystem expansion, Riverside County's application to become a STEM Ecosystem within the Network was accepted, reflecting ongoing efforts to increase student access to high-quality STEM education.

The STEM Learning Ecosystem convening addresses critical updates, challenges, and initiatives in STEM education. By staying informed and collaborating, stakeholders aim to renew their commitment to STEM education and ensure its prioritization in schools across the country.

Click here to join us, and register for the next CA STEM Network meeting on June 6, at 2:00PM.

UPCOMING EVENTS

<u>June 6</u> CA STEM Network Meeting @2:00 PM

<u>June 23</u> Early Math Symposium @9:00 AM

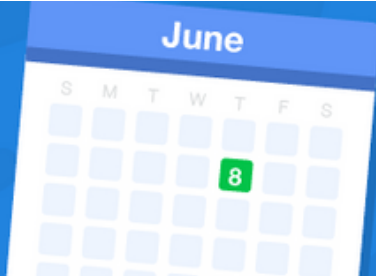<u>June 12 to June 16</u> Apple Materials Research Facility in San Jose

Legislative Update

As mentioned during the Network meeting on Wednesday, May 17th, both the Senate and Assembly Appropriations Committees met on Thursday, May 18th to pass or hold on more than 1,000 bills in their suspense files. Several STEM-related bills we have been tracking and updating the Network on were in these suspense files and all made it out without amendments and will be slated for a floor vote in the coming weeks. These include:

- AB 694 (Gipson) <u>Teacher Residency Apprenticeship Program</u>
- AB 1054 (Berman): <u>High Schools: Computer Science Education Courses Planning Requirement</u>
- AB 1251 (Luz Rivas): <u>Teacher Credentialing Computer Science Workgroup</u>
- SB 444 (Newman): <u>Community Colleges: MESA Programs</u>

The California STEM Network will continue tracking and supporting these bills as they make their way through the legislative process.

Scratch Foundation to Host Evening Event Promoting Creative Learning through Coding

The Scratch Foundation, known for its creation of Scratch and Scratch Jr digital tools, is hosting an upcoming event dedicated to fostering creative learning through coding within local communities. Scheduled for Thursday, June 8th, 2023, from 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM, the event will take place at the Google Community Space located at 188 Embarcadero, San Francisco, CA, 941105.

The Scratch Foundation has long been committed to equipping children with essential skills such as creativity, communication, and technological literacy through its innovative digital resources. This event aims to bring together like-minded individuals to discuss and explore ways of implementing creative learning through coding in diverse communities.

During the evening, attendees will have the opportunity to engage in a lively discussion about the importance of nurturing creativity and technological skills among children. The Scratch Foundation's representatives, along with esteemed guest speakers from the field of education and technology, will share insights and best practices on introducing coding as a means of creative expression. By bringing together educators, community leaders, and coding enthusiasts, this event aims to foster collaboration and inspire new initiatives that embrace creative learning through coding.

The event is open to anyone with an interest in promoting creative learning through coding, including educators, parents, students, community leaders, and tech enthusiasts. Attendees will have the chance to network, exchange ideas, and gain valuable insights into the Scratch Foundation's initiatives. Additionally, there will be opportunities to explore hands-on coding activities, showcasing the power of Scratch and Scratch Jr as educational tools.

To ensure your place at this exciting event, please save the date - Thursday, June 8th, 2023, at 5:30 PM - and make your way to the Google Community Space on 188 Embarcadero, San Francisco, CA, 941105. For further details and to register, visit the Scratch Foundation's website.

About the Scratch Foundation: The Scratch Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering young people to create, collaborate, and think critically through coding. By developing and providing innovative digital tools such as Scratch and Scratch Jr, the foundation aims to foster creativity, communication, and technological literacy among children worldwide.

Space Entrepreneurs Academy to Host Several Programs and Workshops Designed to Empower and Inspire Educators

Get ready to unlock new horizons in your teaching journey by signing up for one of the many upcoming offerings from the Space Entrepreneurs Academy (SEA).

1. Summer Teacher Workshop: Modeling The Future

Are you eager to enhance your teaching strategies and bring innovation into your classrooms? The highly anticipated summer teacher workshop on "Modeling The Future" is just around the corner. Join the SEA on July 17th for an immersive professional development experience where you will learn practical techniques and gain invaluable insights from renowned experts in the field. This workshop promises to equip you with the tools and inspiration to empower your students' learning. The registration deadline is July 7th. Can't make it in July? Save the date for their fall workshop on September 25th. For more information and to register, visit the MTFC Teacher Workshops here.

2. Plant the Moon/Mars Challenge

Calling all innovators and aspiring space enthusiasts! The "Plant the Moon/Mars Challenge" is set to launch soon. This exhilarating competition invites student teams to explore sustainable methods for cultivating plant life on the moon and Mars. Stay tuned as registration opens in the coming weeks. This opportunity is perfect for students, friends, and fellow educators who have a passion for space exploration. For more information, visit plantthemoon.com.

We invite you to be an advocate for these programs by sharing this newsletter and spreading the word through your community. Your support in promoting these events will help us reach even more educators and make a significant impact in the field of education.

If you have any questions about these competitions and programs, or need further information, please reach out to Jeanne at jeanne@competitionsciences.org