October 29, 2015

Dear Symposium Attendee:

It is my sincere pleasure to welcome you to the 2015 California STEM Symposium.

This one-of-a-kind gathering is a showcase of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs, curriculum, and resources. In addition, the conference will highlight the California State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics, the California Next Generation Science Standards, and career technical education. It is an opportunity for more than 300 presenters to share their best practices and for more than 2,500 attendees to develop new ideas and network with colleagues.

California’s rich cultural diversity has always been its strength, providing the talent, drive, and creativity to preserve and enhance our state’s leadership in technology, entertainment, agriculture, and so many other fields. Jobs in engineering, science, and other STEM fields pay more, on average, than jobs in other fields. In addition, they fuel California’s economy, keeping it a global leader in technology. Yet only 15 percent of those with engineering degrees are women, and only 42 percent of those who hold jobs in life sciences are women. In addition, African Americans and Latinos are underrepresented in STEM fields. With our combined efforts, we can expand involvement in these underrepresented areas.

Last month I released A Blueprint for Environmental Literacy: Educating Every California Student In, About, and For the Environment. This Blueprint will guide how environmental literacy should best be integrated with all of California’s standards, which will support and further STEM learning in our schools.

This year’s STEM Symposium is organized around the following strands: Diversity, Girls, and Inclusion in STEM; Business, Community, and Post-Secondary Partnerships; STEM Learning Across Disciplines; STEM in Out-of-School/Expanded Learning and Pathways; STEM and the Arts; and Leadership in STEM.

I hope that you enjoy the third annual STEM Symposium and that you will bring back ideas and tools to enhance and support STEM education in your schools and expanded learning programs.

Thank you for your work in preparing California’s students to become our country’s future STEM innovators, workforce, and inspiration.

Sincerely,

Tom Torlakson
State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Welcome to the 3rd Annual California STEM Symposium!

Whether this is your first time attending the California STEM Symposium or you’ve been with us since the beginning, we are so glad to have you here in Anaheim—just around the corner from the “Happiest Place on Earth!”

Each year, the Californians Dedicated to Education Foundation and our partners, the California Department of Education and the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls, work together to bring you an event that highlights the importance of bringing access to high-quality STEM education to all students.

From our diverse and celebrated Keynote Speakers, to the roundtable discussions led by your peers, to the presentations by proud students in our Share Fair, and to the brand-new Makerspace (brought to us by Sonoma State University), once again our focus is on the important role STEM plays in a well-balanced, 21st-century education.

The remodeling of California’s public education system is well underway and we know educators like you are hard at work in implementing these updates. While there may be some dust and noise, education in California is moving forward in a gradual, sensible, and collaborative way to better meet the needs of all of our students and prepare them as tomorrow’s workforce.

STEM learning helps to develop the kinds of knowledge and skills we know students need to be prepared for college and their future careers. Critical thinking, collaboration, explaining answers, and learning from mistakes: these are the skills students develop through a strong STEM education. Like strands in a rope, they are woven together to help students succeed when they enter the world outside of the classroom. Each strand is stronger and serves students better when it is tightly woven together with the rest. These skills strands are flexible and versatile, and can be woven into all sorts of ropes that can be used in school and in life. But students need opportunities to test and apply them—waving and reweaving the strands into different ropes.

As a STEM educator, you facilitate this weaving in your classroom, your afterschool and summer programs, and in your communities. Over these next two days, we hope you will take advantage of opportunities to learn new ways of bringing STEM to life for students, meeting and talking with your peers and collaborators, and sharing what works for you.

Thank you for joining us and for all you do for kids every day. Have fun!

With admiration,

Shelly Masur, CEO
Californians Dedicated to Education Foundation
Dear Friends:

In 2015, women still hold only 25 percent of our country’s STEM jobs. Studies by STEMConnector.org found:

- Female high school students are significantly less likely than their male counterparts to have plans to pursue a college major or career in STEM (15 percent vs. 44 percent).
- Male students are about eight times more likely to say they plan to pursue a career in Engineering or Technology than female students.
- 80 percent of female students interested in a STEM major or career plan to specifically pursue the Sciences, compared to only 30 percent of male students interested in a STEM major.

The California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls is proud to, once again, partner with the Californians Dedicated to Education Foundation to bring you the 2015 California STEM Symposium, along with the California Department of Education and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tom Torlakson. What started three short years ago has developed into a much-acclaimed opportunity to bring STEM leaders and practitioners together. Our focus on innovative ways to engage students, families, schools, libraries, educators, businesses, and communities is central to California’s efforts to build a diverse highly-skilled 21st-century science, technology, education, and mathematics workforce.

Thank you for your commitment to California’s next generation of STEM innovators. We are confident that you will leave this conference with new ideas and creative ways to inspire girls to explore new areas of interest and stay focused on STEM learning.

Geena Davis, Chair

Commissioners Lupita Cortez Alcala, Kafi Blumenfield, Assemblymember Nora Campos, Lauri Damrell, Senator (ret.) Martha M. Escutia, Assemblymember Cristina Garcia, Marina Illich, Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin, Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson, Senator Carol Liu, Senator Holly Mitchell, Karen Nelson, Julie Su, Alisha Wilkins, and Major Ofelia Alvarez-Willis

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