



The Mid-Columbia STEM Nexus Initiative: Advancing local STEM education

Summer 2024

Since its inception in July of 2020, the Mid-Columbia STEM Nexus Initiative has responded to and provided solutions for the education needs of the Mid-Columbia region. The five community projects identified were awarded over \$270,000 and since then have been underway and making progress to advance equity in STEM education for local, underserved populations.

The impact and status of these projects are summarized below:

- **LIGO Docent Program** was developed to enhance K—12 outreach efforts at the new Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) Exploration Center (LExC). In September of 2023, the pilot program kicked off and hired four Delta High School students. The selected docents had the unique opportunity to contribute to observatory outreach activities, such as facilitating field trips and communicating their science to the broader public at STEM nights, as well as engaging directly with LIGO staff to gain experience related to their future and desired career pathways. Notably, one student presented their work at a laser detector conference in Louisiana (the home location of LIGO's sister facility) in April of 2024.
- **Washington State University (WSU) / Columbia Basin College (CBC) STEM Summer Camps** completed their planned activities as part of the 2-year grant July 30, 2023. WSU Tri-Cities used the STEM Nexus Grant to host a summer STEM camp for 195 local students over two years (2022—2023) expanding access for underrepresented and underserved students in our community and inspiring curiosity and a passion for STEM pathways. Additionally, CBC's Education department partnered with Pasco School District to provide high-quality STEM professional development to PSD faculty and meaningful learning experiences to more than 70 PSD students during a STEM camp in June 2023. Students and faculty engaged in high-quality STEM lessons and activities in a conducive learning environment on the CBC campus.
- **Delta High School Innovation** will sustain the STEM education efforts and commitment Delta has to being at the forefront of innovation for the Mid-Columbia and Tri-Cities area high schools. Through reinvigoration of its rigorous, evidence-based curriculum made relevant by intensive STEM community involvement and enhanced and increased opportunity for teacher professional development, Delta will continue to transform learning through innovation.
- **Richland School District 3 R's for Choice Future** and **Kennewick School District Building a Maker Mindset** were completed summer 2022. For more information on these projects, as well as **Pasco School District Coder Z Platform Training** project in progress, please refer to the [STEM Summer 2021](#) update.