

2008 Community Forum on Science Education Feedback from Participants

Background: On October 6, 2008, parents, students, educators and members of the community met to discuss the future of science education in the Olympia School District. The forum is part of a two-year process to examine science education and make recommendations and plans for improving the K-12 science program and selecting strong instructional materials to support it.

The process: Student facilitators led attendees in a World Café format, a method that allows all attendees to participate in the conversation and hear from others. People at the forum initially were asked to discuss three questions:

How do we imagine our graduates impacting their communities in five or ten years?

What really matters in science education in our district?

What are different ways by which our students can acquire the scientific skills and understanding they'll need?

The results: After they had talked about the three initial questions, participants at the forum were asked a "harvest question" to summarize their discussions. The question was: *How do we move toward a dynamic and sustainable model of science education?* The feedback from participants at the Science Forum is below.

Broad Theme #1: Science education should be holistic, stressing interconnectedness and relationships between key concepts

- *Recognize early childhood development and make opportunities available*
- *Middle school requirements should provide a foundation for students so they can diversify in high school*
- *Put greater focus on connecting math and science learning*
- *Problem solving should be across the content area...more integration across the disciplines, emphasize interdisciplinary approaches*
- *Need to focus on relationships between student and teacher, especially students who are on the margins*
- *Science education needs to be holistic and part of the whole person learning*
- *Science should help students see how the world is connected and encourage engagement in the world*
- *We need to change the societal value system as it relates to science education*

Broad Theme #2: Science education should stress applicability to the lives of students

- *We should apply science to daily activities*
- *There should be more recognition and visibility for the importance of science*
- *We must recognize motivation in engaging students in science*
- *Provide positive feedback...pay it forward to the perfect world*
- *Need to show how it is connected to the real world throughout their whole life and appreciate its applications*
- *Engage students in real community problems, show them the importance of science in society*
- *Science education should teach persistence and fortitude*

Broad Theme #3: Science education should focus on different methods of learning

- *There are incredible opportunities in science for hands on learning and experiments*
- *There should be a balance of open ended inquiry by students and instruction by the teacher*
- *The focus should be on examining compelling questions and nurturing scientific curiosity*

- *Look at the application of computer simulations to assist learning*
- *Can we find ways to help students engage in science in the workplace?*
- *Science education should start out young students with a hands on approach to engage students and progress into the more theoretical approach later ... it is a progression*
- *Engage students at young age and encourage personal inquiry*
- *We need to focus on the scientific method and critical thinking skills*
- *Science is a thought process....teach kids to 'think'*
- *Show the link between creativity and science*
- *Students in science need to appreciate how to get a result and be able to make predictions*

<p>Broad Theme #4: Science education requires certain resources</p>
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- *Provide adequate compensation to science educators – science should be comparable to athletics*
- *We need more diversity in science offerings for high school students and it should be applied science as well as theoretical seniors*
- *Let's connect the curriculum with scientific resources in our community and bring that local pool of knowledge and understanding of science into the schools*