

May 21, 2020

The Honorable Holly Mitchell  
Chair, Senate Budget Committee  
State Capitol, Room 5050  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Richard Roth  
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee #1  
State Capitol, Room 5019  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Phil Ting  
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee  
State Capitol, Room 6026  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Kevin McCarty  
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee #2  
State Capitol, Room 2136  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Include Science Instruction as part of the Academic Core Curriculum, State Budget Act

Dear Budget Committee and Budget Subcommittee Chairs,

Science teaching and learning for California's 6 million TK-12 students has been making strong improvement in recent years, engaging children in meaningful investigations to understand the world they live in. But these gains are now in danger of being lost in the scramble to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closures.

Therefore, we, the undersigned coalition of educators and scientists are writing to strongly urge that science instruction be explicitly included as part of the state's academic core curriculum. We believe it is imperative that any measures taken to address learning loss through teacher professional development, the adoption of instructional materials, addressing the 'digital divide' and supporting distance learning explicitly include science alongside English language arts and mathematics.

We specifically ask that the language included in the education Budget Trailer Bill and the final State Budget Act authorizing funding for the above mentioned purposes, as well as any guidance provided to local education agencies, explicitly reference science instruction as part of the academic core curriculum--as was done in the narrative of the Governor's May Revision: "California provides instruction and support services to roughly six million students in grades kindergarten through twelve in more than 10,000 schools throughout the state. A system of 58 county offices of education, 1,000 local school districts, and more than 1,200 charter schools provides instruction in English, mathematics, history, **science** (*emphasis added*), and other core competencies."

Science is a critical component of TK-12 learning, empowering students to explore the questions that arise from their emerging observation and understanding of the world they live in. Teachers and education partners have been strategically focused on implementing the robust Next Generation Science Standards, adopted by California in 2013. Several school districts across the state led the way with early implementation efforts. Efforts to share their lessons learned and best practices for facilitating inquiry, critical thinking, and communication through authentic experiences in science and engineering are gaining traction and showing results.

As schools plan for the start of the new school year, it is critical that school districts prioritize science alongside language arts and math, and that they provide the teacher professional development, curriculum, and support needed to keep the momentum going.

Despite the challenges of social distancing, and possible periodic shifts to online or at home learning, California's school children all deserve access to high quality, standards-aligned, meaningful science learning experiences. Science can't be brushed aside; it can, and must, continue.

The good news is that teachers and school districts do not have to do it alone. California has an abundance of science centers, environmental education programs, university researchers, and science and engineering sector employers who will continue to be strong partners in the march toward equity in access to the learning experiences that create pathways into impactful STEM jobs (science, technology, engineering and math) that drive our state's economy.

We've been inspired by the creative, thoughtful ways teachers are engaging with their students during the emergency shelter in place. Despite their efforts, learning loss will be significant for many California students—especially, once again, those most affected by poverty. As we prepare for the start of the new school year, we call on you to ensure science remains an integral part of core instruction, starting from the earliest years when research shows it has the greatest impact.

By including support for TK-12 science teaching and learning in state budget priorities, you can help ensure that the next generation of doctors, immunologists, chemists, makers, researchers and problem solvers are building the skills they will need to solve California's future challenges.

Sincerely,  
Coalition of Concerned Bay Area Scientists and Science Educators

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Community Resources for Science

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Executive Director  
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Cc:

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