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May 5, 2010

Dr. Randolph Ward
County Superintendent of Schools
San Diego County Office of Education
6401 Linda Vista Road
San Diego, CA 92111

Dear Dr. Ward:

The San Diego Science Alliance eagerly supports the K-12 STEM Model School Collaboratory proposal by SDCOE to the federal Investing in Innovation (i3) grant program. Our board endorsed this proposal at our recent meeting as a commitment from the San Diego community to partner with SDCOE to improve K-12 math and science education.

SDSA represents a 15-year collaboration with SDCOE, San Diego Unified School District, all of the 42 local school districts, and many local businesses and non-profit organizations. Our board members represent a complete spectrum of community support for K-12 science education.

The STEM Collaboratory realizes our vision of community partnerships that meet the needs of K-12 educators.

SDSA pioneered several programs that provide evidence that community support can impact teachers and provide students with engaging learning opportunities. We look forward to collaborating with SDCOE and local districts to expand these and similar programs.

Resource Catalog: SDSA hosts an online database of over 500 resources from about 200 community organizations, including businesses, research institutions, museums, and other non-profits. Teachers have gone to the Resource Catalog for over a decade, and we hope to expand it during this grant program.

Middle School Science Education Leadership Institute: Teachers in middle school need in-service training to better equip them to lead student-centered learning in science. Middle school offers a critical moment to intervene in the choices that students make. Outcomes from the first five years of MSSELI show the continued positive impact of this kind of professional development on teachers, on students, their academic achievement and their aspirations.

STEM Professionals with Class: Building on the earlier success of the NSF-funded PISCES collaboration with SDCOE and SDSU, this program brings scientists and technical professionals into schools to collaborate with teachers and inspire students with real-world

San Diego Science Alliance is the catalyst for improving K-12 science education in San Diego County. We deliver quality experiential programs, build bridges between the region's diverse business, education and scientific research communities, and foster public/private partnerships to increase science literacy.

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applications of classroom subjects. SDSA worked with life-science businesses to create a model program for the biotech industry suitable for grade 7, and expanded that model with other partners for the physical science content in grade 8. This grant will exploit these models and expand them to include many more STEM professionals in many more classrooms.

Health Sciences Initiative: SDSA recognized the workforce needs for increasing numbers of high-school graduates prepared to work in health care careers. This initiative created a program of academies for local high schools that encouraged Latino and minority participation. Initial results were sufficiently promising that SDSA has been asked to expand these programs by our funders.

Robotics: SDSA coordinates several after-school programs focused on engaging students in challenging engineering and computer programming activities. Teachers seek out SDSA collaboration to establish these programs at their schools, to recruit mentors or professionals, and to learn best practices from other teachers. Students show amazing skills during these programs and translate that interest into greater STEM learning in the classroom.


High Tech Fair: SDSA showcases our community connection with local businesses, higher education institutions, research groups and others who demonstrate the use of STEM content in their work. These relationships between STEM professionals and busloads of middle- and high-school students, exposes the community to the opportunities for greater involvement in K-12 STEM education.

Through these programs and our 15-year history of accomplishment, SDSA brings unique value to the K-12 STEM Collaboratory application.

Our region exemplifies the economic impact of STEM innovation in our many biotech and high-tech companies that lead the world. The K-12 STEM Collaboratory enables community support to drive the change agenda championed by SDCOE and the local districts.

We applaud the leadership of the San Diego County Office of Education and stand ready to collaborate. I am pleased to accept the invitation to serve on the Leadership Commons and look forward for SDSA to conclude a memorandum of understanding for this partnership.

Yours sincerely,


Richard J. Beach, PhD
President