

Search4STEM™: A “one stop” portal for Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM)

Despite the urgency to improve STEM education because of its critical role in the future of the states' and the national economy, there is no “one stop” portal for connecting teachers, educational leaders, businesses and other stakeholders with STEM programs, projects, products, initiatives, collaborations and services for education preK -16.

In fact, tens of millions of dollars are appropriated every year for STEM initiatives throughout the nation and yet, the existing STEM data warehouses, inventories and other resource lists are disconnected, disparate and difficult to use, much less to find. There should be a single, trusted site where interested parties can access this information easily.

We are developing an interactive, searchable “one stop” portal for resource and knowledge exchange. Search4STEM will coordinate available STEM assets and make them easily accessible to end-users to support PK-16 teaching and learning. We need to inspire and engage the total community to increase interest in and preparation for the STEM pipeline.

Inclusion in the portal will be determined by a set of pre-established criteria. The system will contextualize the content. Users will not have to hunt to find out how to access the resources, how the resources link to standards and how they relate to personal learning goals.

The following functionality and attributes for this “one stop” STEM portal are:

1. Single user interface
2. Personalized searching capacity
3. Capacity for networking
4. A suite of publishing tools
5. Contextualized resources and trusted sources
6. High quality STEM content organized by pre-established criteria
7. On-demand access
8. Alignment with standards

The added value is that the system is:

1. Organized with and for stakeholders
2. Has capacity for contributed high quality content
3. Will be continually updated

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The time is now and urgent action is needed. The next step is to secure funding for full development of the site. We have a working prototype that we are testing in Massachusetts which will be made available nationwide,
www.search4stem.org/submission.php

Search4STEM has support from national organizations such as CCSSO; governmental agencies, such as the Office of the Lieutenant Governor of MA; the Instructional Technology Division of the Executive Office of Administration and Finance in MA; educational agencies, such as the Massachusetts Departments of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Department of Higher Education as well as foundations, universities and other interested parties.

The project also has support from educational and business professional organizations such as the MA affiliate of ASCD (MASCD), Superintendents' Association (MASS), MassCUE (the MA affiliate of ISTE), CELT, Google and the BioTech Council.

Search4STEM, as it is envisioned, has not been undertaken before. Search4STEM™ will be continuously evolving as new information is added and as tools change. In addition, because the intention is to leverage existing sites, sources and people, Search4STEM will not “reinvent the wheel.”

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