Career Connected Learning
How South Central Washington STEM is helping youths branch out

This is the time of year that many high school seniors are thinking about the next steps that might take them into higher education or a career. During the past few years, those decisions on what to do next -- as well as the opportunities -- have become much more clear for a lot of students in the region. That’s because of everything that’s been happening with the Career Connected Learning programs from South Central Washington STEM.

The SCW STEM Network has been building up its menu of engagement options in Career Connected Learning over the past five years, and serves as one of the nine regional networks for Career Connect Washington.

The range of the everything SCW STEM has been doing with Career Connected Learning activities is built around three areas:

• Step 1: Career Awareness & Exploration — Students have learned about STEM careers through activities or events such as New Tech Careers Growing in the Valley (a partnership with the Washington Tree Fruit Association focusing on tech careers in agriculture), STEM Like Me (bringing STEM professionals into the classroom), and nPower Gorge Girls (providing STEM role models and mentors online for middle school girls in Bickleton and Goldendale).

• Step 2: Career Preparation — SCW STEM has worked with intermediaries such as Computing For All to develop the Computer And Software Technician (CAST) program that helps students earn industry-recognized software credentials and the potential for paid internships; CAST is now recruiting students to start programs this fall at West Valley High School and the Yakima Valley Technical Skills Center. Also, a partnership with the Seattle area’s AJAC (Aerospace Joint Apprenticeship Committee) offers a pre-apprenticeship pipeline leading to job placements; its first cohort of 10 students graduated in December. And, SCW STEM helps place juniors from Washington State University’s data analytics program into paid internships of 8-10 weeks with companies in the ESD 105 region -- potentially leading to future job offers.

• Step 3: Career Launch — This part offers programs that prepare students for their future careers. Here, students spend their time in paid work-based experiences aligned with classroom instruction as they progress toward a degree, a post-secondary credential, and the skills for meaningful employment. These programs include CAST, the Youth and Adult Registered Apprenticeship programs, and opportunities in other industry sectors.

Explaining what emerges through the career launch activities, SCW STEM coordinator Mark Cheney notes: “It’s a game changer for kids. They may not have been all that invested in traditional school. But when they’re in a career emphasis, now school looks very different and they’re excited about school.”

To learn more about the Career Connected Learning programs, contact either of the two staff members pictured above: SCW STEM coordinator Mark Cheney at mark.cheney@esd105.org or Career Connected Learning coordinator Hugo Moreno at hugo.moreno@esd105.org.

New federal grant boosts the work!

This past winter, ESD 105 in partnership with the RGI grant firm in Sunnyside received a five-year research grant from the U.S. Dept. of Education to promote STEM programs in about half a dozen school districts. The new project is designed to expand involvement in the STEM fields by 6th-12th grade students who will learn from guest speakers and role models from the STEM world about career possibilities, educational planning, and related instruction. There will also be online opportunities for students to connect with STEM mentors from around the state.

The grant will bring about $4 million throughout the five years, $800,000 of that during the first year. ESD 105 Teaching and Learning director Mike Closner says he expects the work will impact about 240 students within the first year, potentially scaling up to reach to about 2,600 during the course of the grant.

Closner notes: “We want to provide opportunities for students who come from rural areas to work with role models within the STEM fields and to envision themselves in those roles.”
There may have been some very inventive thinking as to *how* to display the 2021 edition of the ESD 105 Regional High School Art Show. But it was clearly outmatched by the levels of inventive thinking among the creative output produced by all the students whose works were in this year’s fully online event!

Our 2021 show is the result of 84 entries by 61 students from 13 of our region’s high schools. Entries this year came from Cle Elum-Roslyn, Davis, East Valley, Eisenhower, Goldendale, Grandview, Granger, Highland, La Salle, Kittitas, Royal, Toppenish, and West Valley.

The online show will remain up for viewing at the ESD 105 website through at least the end of the school year.
ESD 105 Regional High School Art Show

“Cog-Mented Convergement”
Madisen Burley, 11th grade
Cle Elum-Roslyn High School
Regional Award

“In the Shadows”
Mia Dufault, 10th grade
Davis High School
Regional Award

“Wanna Go Skateboarding?”
Maria Jacobson, 10th grade
Highland High School
Regional Award

“Graceful Beauty”
Emely Abarca, 12th grade
Davis High School
Regional Award

“God of Music”
Carter Williams, 12th grade
West Valley High School
Regional Award

“Cog-Mented Convergement”
Madisen Burley, 11th grade
Cle Elum-Roslyn High School
Regional Award

Regional Award winners advance to OSPI’s statewide Superintendent's High School Art Show.

Upcoming Opportunities to Grow

Balanced Calendar Summit – May 13
ESD 105 is hosting the statewide Balanced Calendar Summit on Thursday, May 13, from 8 a.m. to 12 noon. This free, multi-speaker Zoom event will offer information and discussions on the concepts of a reformatted school calendar and its affects on the support of student learning. See log-in and pre-registration details on the ESD 105 homepage.

Improvement Science Summit – June 21-22
ESD 105, Wenatchee’s NCESD 171, and Spokane’s NEWESD 101 host the Improvement Science Summit via Zoom during this Monday-Tuesday series that will run from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. each day. Early registration is $275 prior to May 31. With strands available in “Improvement Science Foundations” and “Learning for Improvement,” this event will show how to address gaps in your school’s learning system, promote continuous improvement, and re-energize the work of school teams. Register at https://www.pdenroller.org/esd171/catalog/event/113454.

John Medina rescheduled to October 23
Brain researcher and author Dr. John Medina is coming back to the region -- in person -- for a presentation on Saturday, Oct. 23, from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. Registration is $150 and will include a copy of his book, “Attack of the Teenage Brain!” Register at https://www.escweb.net/wa_esd105/catalog/session.aspx?sessionId=129687.

Get details on all our workshops at www.esd105.org.
New additions to your ESD programs ...

Human Resources: Rosa Iturbide joined the ESD 105 team in January as our new human resources generalist. She’s the person who area school staff members and student teachers will be seeing for their fingerprinting, plus she oversees testing sessions for paraprofessionals. She also helps process and post openings for new positions at ESD 105, and assists new hires at our agency on their paperwork. Rosa came to the ESD after 12 years at Heritage University, where she was primarily a human resources manager and briefly served there as the interim human resources director. The Mexico native is a graduate of Wapato High School and has a bachelor’s degree in business administration from Heritage.

Migrant Education: Samantha Ruiz-Thomas started work in January in the new position of migrant academic service coordinator. She’s supporting school districts on English language arts instructional work with their migrant students, and will eventually conduct staff trainings and programming assistance for schools that have migrant summer program grants. Samantha worked the past three years as the academic intervention manager for the K-12 online public school Insight School of Washington. Prior to that, she was a language arts special ed teacher and migrant graduation specialist at Wahluke High School, and a retention specialist at Heritage University. Samantha graduated from Cle Elum-Roslyn, and obtained her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in English at Central Washington University.

Open Doors 105: Briseida Mayorga is the newest instructional assistant in the program that has now grown to support more than 75 young people who are in the process of completing their GED. She helps the enrollees with their coursework, and guides them in creating their resume, High School and Beyond Plan, and career pathways. Briseida grew up in Yakima and completed her own GED through the College Alternative Program at Yakima Valley College. Before coming into the Open Doors 105 team in January, she was the head secretary for two years at Selah’s Robert Lince Early Learning Campus, and before that worked as an elementary school paraeducator and office assistant within the Yakima School District. She’s now enrolled at Yakima Valley College with plans to eventually become a teacher.

Student Support: Hope Baker arrived in January as a mental health specialist with the new five-year Project Aware grant that will be serving the Wahluke, Sunnyside, and Yakima school districts. She will be offering trainings and consultation for those school districts as they develop and adopt multi-tiered systems of mental health interventions for students. The work will include the adoption of universal screenings, plus the development of trauma-informed classrooms. Hope previously did behavioral health work through Merit Resource Services. She’s a Wapato High School graduate with an A.A. and chemical dependency studies certificate from Yakima Valley Community College, plus a majors in psychology and sociology from Central Washington University. Hope is currently pursuing her master’s degree in industrial and organizational psychology from Grand Canyon University.

Special Education: In January, Laurel Huth became a Newbridge Learning Academy teacher at our Zillah-based site that currently serves an enrollment of nine students with severe emotional and behavioral challenges. Her role there involves instructing those children on social management skills as well as their general academic learning. Laurel previously worked for a year as an alternative learning specialist at Selah High School, and earlier was a paraprofessional for English language learners at the White Salmon Valley School District. The White Salmon native graduated from Columbia High School, has a B.S. in exercise science from Linfield College, and is pursuing a master’s degree in teaching at Heritage University.

Head Start: Jazmin Rials started in December as a family wellness integration content specialist, offering trauma-informed services for Head Start children and families, plus guidance to the program’s staff on promoting family wellness practices. Jazmin joined us after five years as a bilingual social worker for the Yakima region of the Washington State Dept. of Social and Health Services, following earlier duties locally with Head Start. The Mexico native attended the Mabton School District, graduated from Prosser High School, earned her A.A. as a Running Start student at Yakima Valley College, and got her B.A. in sociology with certification in human resources from Washington State University.

- Casey Hokanson began his activities in January as the second system administrator for the ESD 105 Head Start programs in Yakima, Ellensburg, East Wenatchee, and Bridgeport. He’s offering I.T. support for those classrooms, setting up and maintaining their networks, deploying laptops and phones for Head Start staff, and fielding technology requests. The graduate of Ferndale High School earned his A.A. at Skagit Valley College and is working toward his bachelor’s degree in computer science from Governors University. Casey previously performed I.T. duties for Catholic Charities in Yakima during the past four years.