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Sammamish High School Wins Competitive \$4 Million Federal i3 Grant Team Secures More Than \$830,000 in Private Matching Funds

Bellevue—A group of committed partners has successfully secured the \$830,000 private match required to win a \$4.1 million federal grant for Sammamish High School. The grant is from the U.S. Department of Education's \$650 million Investing in Innovation (i3) program. Sammamish was named one of 49 finalists out of nearly 1700 applicants nationwide in early August. Bellevue is the only finalist from Washington State.

The Sammamish proposal is a five-year plan for implementing problem-based learning across all subject areas with a unifying focus on "Engineering Global Solutions" to encourage growth and interest in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). To receive the \$4.1 million i3 grants, the Bellevue School District had to secure an additional 20 percent in private sector matching donations by September 8. That gave Sammamish Principal Tom Duenwald, the District and the Bellevue Schools Foundation less than five weeks to secure \$830,000 in private sector commitments to qualify for the federal grant.

Of the \$830,000 in required private matching funds, the largest contribution is coming from the newly established nonprofit organization, Washington STEM, which is providing in-kind staff time and resources valued at \$628,700. Washington STEM Board Chair Dean Allen commented, "We are thrilled to partner with Sammamish High School and are confident that the work will have a dramatic impact on students."

Washington STEM will capture and disseminate the lessons learned from the Bellevue project, with the goal of spurring the transfer and adaptation of promising practices around the state. This represents an unprecedented opportunity to leverage the \$4.1 million in federal funds coming in Washington. Allen added, "Our work will assure that the benefits go far beyond the district's boundaries, with an emphasis on serving our most at-risk students."

McKinstry, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Microsoft, The Boeing Company, Lease Crutcher Lewis and others supported Washington STEM's design phase, and the organization is formally launching later this fall. Other funders are supporting the Bellevue project with cash or in-kind donations such as professional development services by the College Board, a video documentary on the key aspects of the transformation at Sammamish by the George Lucas Educational Foundation, and/or STEM mentors for students from industry partner Google. Altogether, over \$1 million in letters of commitment for cash and in-kind donations has been received. "We are excited to work with Sammamish on this project as our Edutopia team showcases how schools can be transformed to make learning real, rigorous and rewarding" said Steve Arnold, Co-founder and Vice-chairman--The George Lucas Educational Foundation.

The Sammamish model increases college and career readiness by closing achievement gaps and increasing rigor and equity by weaving together proven program segments in a new way. One important component is significant emphasis on mentoring: partnering STEM-employed community members with students and teachers, and involving them as project overseers. "Improving STEM education is understood broadly as essential to regaining this country's international competitiveness so we're not surprised by the interest and support we've received for our project," Duenwald explained.

Duenwald notes that support began with those closest to the school: "All of us at the school were gratified that one of the early pledges received was for \$25,000 from our Sammamish Totems Enrichment Programs Supporters. We are very excited about our STEM project's focus on furthering the college and career readiness of all students and we're thrilled that our outstanding partners are just as excited about our work together."

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Sammamish teacher and STEM planning team member Kim Herzog added, “Sammamish teachers have worked very hard to make this happen for our students. We feel the problem-based approach will allow our students to gain the skills and knowledge needed to compete in the 21st century.”

The problem-based learning curriculum will be developed by teachers and administrators in collaboration with the district and the University of Washington's Institute for Math and Science Education (UW IMSE). This innovative program, representing a fundamental shift in the educational experience for students, has the professional support of a diverse and exceptional group of educational and industry leaders. These partners include Washington STEM Center, College Board, Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC), The Boeing Company, George Lucas Educational Foundation, Bellevue Schools Foundation, Sammamish Totems Enrichment Programs Supporters and Google.

“This type of innovative, problem-based, instructional model will inform our system-wide goal to prepare our students for success through college to become competitive in a global economy,” said Bellevue Superintendent Amalia Cudeiro.”

The i3 grant proposal received letters of support from nationally recognized leaders in the areas of education transformation such as Dr. John Bransford, of the Learning in Informal and Formal Environments (LIFE) Center at the University of Washington, Dr. David Conley, Director of the Center for Educational Policy Research (CEPR), Educational Methodology, Policy, and Leadership at the University of Oregon, noted biologist Dr. Leroy Hood of the Institute for Systems Biology, and Dr. Pat Wasley, former Dean of the UW College of Education.

Once finalized, the project will begin in late September 2010.