

News release



Everett Public Schools

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Woodside Elementary principal Dr. Betty Cobbs earns \$5,000 LASER award *Principal's science advocacy evident as she AND Woodside have earned awards this year*

Washington State Leadership and Assistance for Science Education Reform ([LASER](#)) selected just five recipients for its annual *Science Education Advocate Award*. Two of those recipients have Everett connections. One is Dr. Betty Cobbs, long-time school district leader who is now principal at Woodside Elementary. The other recipient and only organization on the winners' list is [Imagine! Children's Museum](#) in downtown Everett.

Thanks to the Boeing Company, each of the state's five winners has earned \$5,000 to be given to the

not-for-profit public education entity of their choice to use to benefit science education. Dr. Cobbs has chosen to award her \$5,000 to [Woodside Elementary School's PTA](#). When asked why she chose that group, Cobbs explained, "PTA advocates for the well-being and education of all students. In addition, the Woodside PTA provides enrichment resources for our students. The funds will be reserved for expanding the library collection of non-fiction science books for students in kindergarten through fifth grade."

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Just imagine what opportunities they are going to have opened to them after experiencing six more years of STEM education in our secondary schools. Thank you, Betty, for opening the door to a STEM future for all of your students."
Bob Sotak, director of science curriculum and instruction

The emphasis on science at Woodside and across the district is increasingly making a difference as evidenced in the LASER award and just-announced state awards for schools. Early in April the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction announced the [Washington Schools of Achievement](#) awards. Woodside was one of eight schools in the district to earn this award, based upon student achievement in 2012. Not coincidentally, the Woodside award was earned because of science achievement – one of seven categories possible in the Schools of Achievement award.

Cobbs' life-long passion for each student's learning and for science education is well-known in the district. In her early years as a teacher, she was the science resource teacher for her grade level. That experience of planning and teaching science for each class stayed with her as she became a school principal. "Kids love science," she declares and believes, "Early experiences in science help develop problem-solving skills that empower students to participate in an increasingly scientific and technological world."

"Science must be available to each student at each school," Cobbs believes. "Teaching science at Woodside is not an 'option,'" she emphasizes. Science instruction is part of every classroom from kindergarten through fifth grade. Teachers work in collegial teams across subject areas and grade levels to create common assessments, develop teaching strategies, design supplemental instruction and enrichment activities.

At Woodside the librarian, [Mrs. Litzkow](#), infuses science into the library program, is the school science leader and serves on the district committee as a Science Advocate for Woodside. One of Woodside's first grade teachers, [Brian Cummins](#), serves on the building science cadre and is also a district-level Science Advocate for Woodside.

The Woodside staff has its science act together, and they involve the community as well. The Boeing Company is a partner helping to fund after-school science and math learning experiences for fourth and fifth graders. Woodside students enjoy an after-school Science Academy that focuses on math, science and writing. Woodside staff sought out a neighboring school's staff to learn what that school was doing to get 98 percentile science test results. "This action brought the two schools together, enabling teachers to break down barriers that often exist between schools that differ in demographics, socio-economic levels and beliefs that high achievement levels are based on socio-economic levels and family background," Cobbs explains.

"Yes, science is alive and well at Woodside," smiles Cobbs. If you wander the library shelves, you will find non-fiction science books (when those popular volumes are not checked out by students). "We added these books to encourage students to read science materials, improve vocabulary and build students' informational literacy skills." You will also know you are in a science school because of the many science-oriented assemblies, classroom workshops, lab experiences, after school programs, partnerships, community/school projects, guest speakers and field trips. A special highlight each year is an evening K-5 science fair, open to the public.

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Bob Sotak, the district's science director of [science curriculum and instruction](#) is pleased but not surprised at Cobb's award and science success in district schools, "It is heartening to see the impact of our sustained effort to reform science education.

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