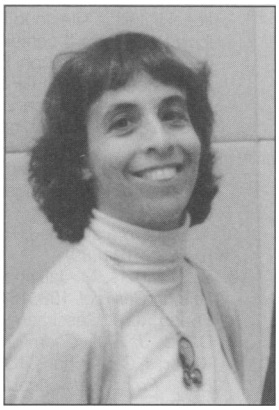
edited by KAREN HOPKIN

## Enriching Science Education for Students with Disabilities

This year the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) Convention in Kansas City, Missouri, will begin with a working conference on science education for students with disabilities. Eighty science teachers and educators will gather on 30 and 31 March to share their experiences and formulate strategies for encouraging students with disabilities to participate in science.



Laureen Summers

The purpose of the conference, says AAAS Science, Technology, and Disability program associate Laureen Summers, is to "create more awareness of what students with disabilities need to successfully do science." Sponsored by AAAS, NSTA, the Science Association for Persons with Disabilities, and the Association for the Education of Teachers of Science, the 2-day conference will focus attention on four categories of disability—hearing, learning, mobility, and visual impairment.

In addition to discussing how equipment and materials can be adapted to assist children with disabilities, the group will discuss how to change attitudes. "Many pre-college classroom teachers still have stereotypical ideas about what students with disabilities can and cannot do," says program director Virginia Stern. "Teachers, counselors, and family must understand that skills are in the mind—not in the body or in the ears or eyes," she says.

"We don't get encouraged," agrees Summers, who has a mobility impairment. People "assume we don't have the ability to master what's required to do science." On the contrary, Summers says, children with disabilities are constantly figuring out how to cope. "That to me is a prerequisite for doing science," she says. "Being curious and solving problems."

How can the kids be encouraged to participate in science? Summers considers the luncheon for students with disabilities, hosted by AAAS and Boston's Children's Hospital at the AAAS Annual Meeting, a good example. High school–aged students participated in hands-on demonstrations and met scientists with disabilities. "Young people with severe disabilities who were whizzes at math and science were able to show themselves as equals," says Summers, without being "treated in patronizing ways."

How can educators establish a supportive environment? "Laws, like the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, can do a lot to break down the barriers," says Stern. They require employers and schools to provide support services and assistive technologies. But, Stern concludes, "attitude is really the bottom line."

Conference participants will formulate recommendations that they hope will ultimately enhance the quality of science education for students with disabilities.

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## Colloquium Presents Clinton's R&D Budget

Budget watchers across the land anxiously await the unveiling of Clinton's economic plans for fiscal year 1994. Among them is veteran R&D budget analyst Steven Nelson.

Director of the AAAS Science, Technology, and Government Program, Nelson hopes to have details of the FY94 R&D budget by early April. This would give his staff just enough time to do a bit of number crunching before presenting the information at the 18th Annual AAAS Colloquium on Science and Technology Policy on 15 and 16 April.

Perhaps the foremost public meeting on science and technology policy in the United States, the colloquium usually draws about 500 of the nation's top science and technology policy experts. Interest in this year's meeting is high, says Nelson, "because this is the first year of a new Administration and the first chance anyone will have to get information about the new budget."

No one is predicting what will emerge from the budgetary black box. It "depends on the balance that Congress and the Administration will strike between stimulating the economy and dealing with the deficit," says AAAS Science and Policy Programs director Albert Teich.

Although initially a forum for analyzing the President's proposed budget, the colloquium has evolved into a broad-ranging science and technology policy meeting. Presidential Science Adviser John Gibbons will open next month's meeting with an overview of the Administration's science and technology policies.

Much of the first day will be devoted to assessing the government's involvement in technology development. "Clinton and his people are unabashedly in favor of a larger government role in helping the country's economic competitiveness and developing industrial technology," says Nelson, noting that this differs from the Reagan and Bush policies. The Clinton Administration may bolster civilian technology development by redistributing funds previously earmarked for defense, he adds.

In addition to fostering policy debate and budget analysis, the colloquium allows the major R&D funders—NIH, NSF, NASA, and the Departments of Energy and Defense—to present the details of their individual budget proposals.

Wrapping up the session, George Brown, Jr., chairman of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, will present his views on policy directions and the need for research to address societal needs.

The colloquium will be held at the Capitol Hilton, 16th and K Streets, NW, Washington, DC. To pre-register, call 202-326-6600, or register at the Hilton beginning at 8 a.m. on 15 April.

### Affiliate News

Nearly 300 scientific organizations and academies are affiliated with AAAS. Although independent, these sibling societies contribute to the Association's Annual Meeting, international programs, R&D budget analysis, equal opportunity activities, and science education. From time to time, Inside AAAS will highlight the news and activities of the Association's affiliates.

This month, the Association for Women in Mathematics (AWM) announces the relocation of its headquarters to the University of Maryland in College Park. Established in 1971, AWM works to encourage women to study and have active careers in the mathematical sciences. Among other activities, AWM provides travel grants for women to attend research conferences and sponsors awards for undergraduate women mathematicians and excellence in math education. For more information about AWM, call Association Administrator Dawn Wheeler at 301-405-7892.

To contribute news or information about your affiliate, write to Karen Hopkin, AAAS Office of Communications, 1333 H Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005.

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