



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

April 15, 2016

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: 2016 Biotechnology Educator Conference and BioSTEM Resources

I am pleased to announce two exciting new opportunities for Virginia's life science and biology educators, the *2016 Biotechnology Educators Conference* and the *Virginia BioSTEM Resources* Web page. Both of these opportunities represent the Commonwealth's ongoing emphasis on engaging students in bioscience and biotechnology concepts in an effort to further prepare our young people for these exciting fields.

In partnership with the Virginia Department of Education, the Virginia BIO Foundation and Virginia Tech's Biocomplexity Institute and Fralin Biotechnology Institute will sponsor the *2016 Biotechnology Educators Conference*, a cutting-edge, professional development for middle and high school life science and biology teachers. The conference is designed to provide technical and content updates in the pure and applied life sciences including exciting new applications in medicine, infectious disease, and agriculture. The conference will be held on the Virginia Tech campus, beginning on July 27, 2016, with a preconference titled *Biotech Boot Camp*. The pre-conference will be limited to the first 20 teacher registrants and will focus on training on the [Biotech-in-a-Box](#), a free biotechnology kit loan program coordinated by Virginia Tech's Fralin Life Science Institute.

The Department is seeking high school Biology teachers to apply to attend the conference and will assume the cost of registration (which includes meals) and lodging for all public school participants accepted into the program. Teachers from high schools not meeting the state benchmark for accreditation in science **will be given priority**. Scholarships will be provided to the first 50 teachers.

School divisions are strongly encouraged to cover travel expenses for division participants as this cost is not assumed by the Department; however, this is not a requirement of the program. The full conference begins on July 28, 2016. For more detailed information regarding the conference, please visit the *2016 [Biotechnology Educators Conference Web site](#)*

In addition, the Virginia BIO Foundation, in partnership with the VDOE, will release an exciting new resource for teachers, the [Virginia BioSTEM Resources](#) Web page for middle and high school science educators. The Web page houses a range of classroom bioscience and biotechnology resources including laboratory activities, kits for loan, virtual labs, simulations, biotech animations, Web sites, and field trips. The resources were selected by middle and high school teachers, and each resource includes a title, description, and correlation to the 2010 *Science Standards of Learning*.

If you have additional questions about the conference or resources, please contact Eric Rhoades, director, Office of Science and Health Education, by e-mail at Eric.Rhoades@doe.virginia.gov or by telephone at (804) 786-2481.

