

Neuroscience & STEAM caucus briefing and reception: Brains + Art
April 27, 2016



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Thank you for the opportunity to speak briefly about the innovative arts-integrated work our student volunteers are doing to enthuse, inform and educate themselves, K-12 students, and the general public about federal investment in exciting neuroscience research...

We want you to have plenty of time to look at brains, eat lunch, and speak directly with the extraordinary graduates and undergraduates we've brought to Washington DC, about their research on opiate addiction, memory, cannabinoids, hearing loss, adolescent brain development - and their extensive STEAM outreach efforts in the Pacific Northwest...

We want to thank Katie Sale of the American Brain Coalition for organizing this reception. We'd like to thank our reception co-sponsors, including Washington State University Vancouver, Oregon Health and Science University, the Portland Art Museum, Portland State University, and the Phillips Collection, where we'll be this Thursday to present Neuroscience Night, amongst some extraordinary landscape works from Paul Allen's collection. We'd like to thank Paul Aravich from Eastern Virginia Medical School, for providing the extra brains...

And we'd like to thank the co-chairs of the Neuroscience and STEAM caucuses for inviting us to Capitol Hill. Oregon representative Earl Blumenauer has noted that our region is a "powerhouse" of neuroscience research. It also a powerhouse in STEM education, outreach, art, and STEAM. It is not by accident that three of four caucus co-chairs, including Earl Blumenauer, Suzanne Bonamici, and Cathy McMorris Rogers, hail from our land of forests, mountains, painted hills, art studios,

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bicycles, bookstores and unusually good wine and beer. But we've learned that interest in neuroscience research, and the power of art, are universal. We want to thank Elise Stefanik from New York for inviting us here today as well...

We are NW Noggin - a diverse mix of cooperating regional partners who connect, and reach out like neurons to form strong links, and share resources and expertise. We bring graduates, undergraduates, K-12 students, and working scientists together to collaborate. We prepare students to confidently explain topics in neuroscience using art projects and activities in formal, informal, urban, and rural settings. The students you see here, from WSU, PSU, and OHSU, have presented in public schools, theaters, art museums, teacher trainings, scientific conferences, the symphony, homeless youth centers, breweries, and even bike shop/pubs!

In fact, since 2012, our volunteers have developed and delivered their own short- and long-term courses to more than 9,000 academic priority students throughout the Pacific Northwest! We also work with that bike pub (Velo Cult) and offer collaborative public presentations from students studying neuroscience and art. In the last year, these efforts informed more than 750 people about brain research, and gave graduate students experience communicating their work to a lay audience.

Neurons connect to form viable, productive networks, and people do too. Students struggling with school sometimes lack connections, they lack access, and awareness about available options. Many kids don't have a doctor or scientist or artist in their family, and bringing our students in - their "near peers" - suddenly makes these possibilities quite real. Our participants introduce research, and art, to make educational and career opportunities visible, and tangible to others.

And as everyone here knows, the brain is fascinating - it is, after all, you. Learning how it works - what it's made of, how its structure determines its function, literally what you can think, and make and do - is powerful, and actionable information.

We are thrilled about talking with you today, because we believe that our partnership approach can be widely implemented. Universities with research and education programs in neuroscience, art colleges, organizations, and vibrant arts communities can use our experience to contribute to similar STEAM educational efforts in many parts of the country.

Thank you for this opportunity!