

**Cornerstones of Science  
STEM Equity project  
Results From Connecticut Library Association Conference Presentation**

**Overview**

Through Gail Hurley, our SLA partner with the Connecticut State Library, we were given an opportunity to present at the Connecticut Library Association Annual Conference.

**Title:** Well Being of My Community: Aligning Library Capacity to Meet Community Needs (Notes: As the term STEM Equity

**Date:** Wednesday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022

**Time of Presentation:** 3:00 pm (As this was a last minute opportunity, we were scheduled at the end of the last day of the conference.) Gail sent out an invitation prior to the conference for library directors to attend.

**Amount of Time in Session:** 50 minutes

**Presentation Description:** Public libraries are increasingly being called upon to provide critical services and resources to community members on issues such as COVID, food insecurity, water quality, as examples. Gail Hurley, CT State Library and Cindy Randall, Cornerstones of Science will facilitate the use of the STEM Equity Framework (IMLS grant award RE-250085-OLS-21) where participants will explore factors like personal beliefs, organizational culture, community engagement and use to develop a profile that determines how Aware, Intentional or Purposeful is your public library's capacity to provide equitable access and a vision for what a STEM Equity library might look like for your community.

**Goals for Presentation:**

1. Gain more awareness of how "STEM Equity" resonates with the library community
2. Promote the STEM Equity project and value to state and public library leaders
3. Identify potential pilot libraries in CT
4. Validate and Identify Missing themes/attributes of STEM Equity project components in real time

**Anticipated Number of Attendees: 58** Both Gail and I were really surprised at the number that attended because we were anticipating 10 attendees due to the subject and time of presentation. We only had 10 handouts and with the rest of the group we took their emails to send them the activities as well.

[Results](#) of four libraries who gave us their completed assessments can be seen by clicking on the link.

**Activity:** Library – Community Well-being Wheel Assessment: Activity was designed to give library directors a "snapshot" look at the strengths and weaknesses in the four core areas of STEM Equity. From the attendees quick assessment, Gail and I then held a discussion around their findings, what these mean to that library, feedback on the experience and the assessment.

Premise is that we know that library directors will be strong and/or weak in specific categories. The tighter, more circular the shape is when they connect the dots, the more defined their leadership stage for creating an equitable library culture and services. Conversely, the more jagged the shape, will help

library directors identify the particular areas of STEM Equity library culture and services that need more attention. They can begin to identify and understand the root causes for why those areas are weak.

Attendees who completed the exercise were asked to give them back to us so we could look at the answers, assess the validity of the activity and other pertinent information to the project.

#### **Handouts:**

1. [Directions for the Library-Community Well-being Wheel Exercise](#)
2. [Library-Community Well-being Wheel](#)
3. [Four Factors of a STEM Equity Library Definitions](#)
4. [Stages of a STEM Equity Library Leader](#)
5. Draft STEM Equity Frameworks: [Individual/Personal](#); [Organizational Culture](#); [Community Engagement](#); and [Community Member Experience](#) (Notes: The end goals, in the frameworks represent no more than 2-3 because any more would be considered overwhelming. The success indicators are examples of the diverse types of successes and skills needed to achieve that particular end goal. I left 1-2 end blocks open for the attendees to fill in what they thought were important ones for them.)

#### **Discussion questions we asked the attendees included:**

1. Did they find the Library-Community Well-being Wheel Assessment useful/not useful?
2. Did the end goals and success indicators help you to clearly assess your current library's STEM Equity capacities?
3. Any changes or additions to the Assessment Activity and/or frameworks you believe needs to be addressed?
4. What can state libraries do and/or provide to help library leaders with data collection, professional development support or other types of services?

#### **Attendee Feedback**

1. A DIY Community Needs Assessment would be helpful as it is too expensive for libraries to hire consultants.
2. The Library-Community Well-being Wheel Activity would be good for both individual as well as to do in a group with staff.
3. End goal descriptions hard to read. Indicators more helpful and worked well with doing the activity.
4. Need to be more specific when discussing cultural and ethnic disparities. Need to call out more clearly LGBTQ and Age Discrimination.
5. A helpful workshop session would be "How to get comfortable with having uncomfortable conversations with staff and community on policies and behaviors that promote cultural and ethnic racial disparities, racism, biases and lack of access.