



## Engaging Students and Informing the Public

To stimulate the public's curiosity about medical research and advances in medicine, NCRR has been funding innovative outreach projects through Science Education Partnership Awards (SEPA) for the past 15 years. By creating relationships among educators, museum curators, and medical researchers, SEPA encourages the development of hands-on, inquiry-based curricula that inform the participants about such timely issues as obesity, stem cells, and infectious diseases. In addition, SEPA provides professional development for teachers and mentoring opportunities for students K-12, which have proven to be integral to its success. Many SEPA projects are designed to engage underserved and/or minority populations to ensure that they have full opportunities to pursue careers in the health sciences.

For example, in this fiscal year, NCRR has provided almost \$10 million to fund nine new SEPA projects in states ranging from California to New Jersey and Massachusetts to Mississippi. The grants will provide from two to five years of support and include such projects as partnerships between the University of Nebraska Medical Center and tribal schools in Nebraska and South Dakota to increase the number of Native Americans entering health careers. At the Yale University SEPA, K-12 students will learn about infectious diseases and their transmission by studying models of Lyme disease and West Nile virus. At the Children's Museum in Houston, participants will learn how to track their physical activity and nutrition and the role that both play in human health. The SEPA mentoring program developed at West Virginia University has been credited with increasing the percent of students who attend college and with ensuring their retention in college. Furthermore, nearly half of the SEPA students who have participated in the West Virginia program are earning health, science, or technology degrees.

To leverage the tremendous power of such projects, SEPA also provides support so that successful efforts can be widely disseminated. Curricula and other teaching aids are freely available through the Web at [www.ncrrsepa.org](http://www.ncrrsepa.org).

Educating the public about what we do is a great challenge, but it's a vital task I hope you'll join us in undertaking. The future of biomedical research and the nation's health are at stake.

*Barbara Alving, M.D.*

**Barbara Alving, M.D.**  
Acting Director, NCRR

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*Innovative science education projects are changing the way we learn science.*

#### Resource Briefs

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*Grants for high-end instruments give a boost to imaging studies, and more.*

## SCIENCE ADVANCES

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*Scientists explore the therapeutic mechanisms of adult stem cells.*

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