

## Pre-Kindergarten through Twelfth Grade Digital Science Program



**Dr. Vernon Johnson**  
President & CEO

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**Accelerate Learning**  
[www.acceleratelearning.com](http://www.acceleratelearning.com)  
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**CEOCFO: Dr. Johnson, what is the basic idea behind Accelerate Learning™?**

**Dr. Johnson:** Accelerate Learning is a pre kindergarten through twelfth grade digital science program that provides all of the assets a teacher would need to teach science to their students throughout the school year. It is an Online, comprehensive, and hands-on science curriculum for PreK-12 that puts teacher support at its center.

**CEOCFO: How do teachers typically access material today and why should they be accessing it through Accelerate Learning?**

**Dr. Johnson:** They access the curriculum online from any device. Unlike a textbook, we are very dynamic. A textbook is static for eight to ten years, when you buy our product you are buying a product which is continuously updated. Therefore, if Pluto is no longer a planet, our curriculum will reflect the change the very next day, so you are getting a dynamic up to date curriculum. The second thing you are getting is a curriculum that is 100% aligned to your states standards, so it is customized... Our curriculum is written to align to the verb, adjective and noun of the assessments that students must take in order to prove proficiency in the science in their state. Therefore, our customized curriculum gives the assurance to the teacher, parent and the administrators that their students are learning the science that relates directly to the standards that their state has adopted.

**CEOFCO: *How are you able to keep up with the standards and certainly keep up with the new scientific information?***

**Dr. Johnson:** Our curriculum is written by teachers for teachers. The curriculum is classroom practical and easy to use. It is refreshed regularly so that it remains current with changes in science and state standards. The traditional publisher model uses authors that are typically far removed from the classroom, perhaps college level people. We use team of more than 300 practicing teachers and science supervisors. College professors help make certain that our content is accurate. We think that this is the best way to develop curriculum because the curriculum becomes more relevant, because it is written by teacher for teachers. When written by teachers, the curriculum is more practical and easier to use in a wide range of classroom environments. This is important. When you consider that about eighty five percent of all the teachers in America have not been trained to know how to teach science, so it is a little frightening for them to have to teach science. We try to simplify it in a way that makes them feel comfortable in teaching science with all levels of students, pre kindergarten through twelfth grade.

**CEOFCO: *How do you know when a change is warranted? When it is real or when there is enough mass behind it to now to make it acceptable? For example, it was global warming and now it is climate change.***

**Dr. Johnson:** We write to the states standards. Thus, our curriculum reflects what the state has determined that a student must know and be able to do. If a change is made by the state, we make the change. There are controversial content areas like global warming and evolution. We avoid these issues by simply aligning our content in these areas with that approved by the state. We do not to take a political position and we will not take a position that is not supported by alignment with the standards. Frankly, when you look at the state standards for all 50 states, there are many differing opinions about the evolution and about global warming. It is all over the map.

**CEOFCO: *When a teacher goes to your site, what are the experiences they will find?***

**Dr. Johnson:** When accessing our online product portal, there are three experiences. There is a student experience, a parent experience and a teacher experience. In a lesson, the teacher is provided embedded professional development, lesson content, support instructional materials, assessments, and digital books. Students have access to digital books, songs, learning games, interactives, hands on activities, and assessments. Teachers can assign students material and activities and students can submit items to the teacher for review and grading. Parents have access to a Parent Portal which provides information on what a student is doing and activities/resources they may use at home to reinforce the classroom lessons.

**CEOFCO: *Is it the school district? Is it individual schools? Who is buying your services and your products?***

**Dr. Johnson:** It is a variety. Public, private, and charter, schools and districts buy our online, print, hands on kits and training products. Our programs are used prekindergarten through twelfth grades. Often our curriculum is the core program, but some use it as a supplement to the core. Either way, users have access to all the assets. We currently do not sell to individuals as an aftermarket. We only sell to schools and to districts.

**CEOCFO: *What is the STEMcoach™?***

**Dr. Johnson:** STEMcoach is really the basis of how we began. STEMcoach is our way of helping teachers develop more effective instructional strategies to teach science. We offer the training embedded in the online curriculum in the form of videos, readings, and examples. Training can also be provided face to face as an introduction to teaching science, Launch Training, and ongoing Teacher Coaching and Mentoring. We offer a free online STEMcoach portal that provide instructional, assessment, and other resources that are useful to teachers.

**CEOCFO: *Are you finding an increased interest in science or is it still not where you think it should be or where we, as a country, would like it to be?***

**Dr. Johnson:** While it is not where it needs to be, I think the interest level in improving Science education is very high. Businesses need more and better prepared workers and thus educators and politicians are responding by increasing the requirements, standards, and training of teachers. As a nation, we continue to lag behind the performance as compared to other countries in the world. Many say we are in a crisis. It is our mission to address the problem. As important as the need to increase student preparation, the methods of science instruction must also be addressed. Too many teachers are simply using the textbook and having students memorize facts, rather than using more effective instructional methods such as hands on investigation, exploration, explanation techniques and inquiry. That is why our STEMcoach training and ongoing professional support programs are so important.

**CEOCFO: *Do you work with homeschoolers?***

**Dr. Johnson:** We have some homeschoolers. We are just so focused on public, private and charter schools that frankly, we do not have enough time in the day to service individual families. Although homeschoolers is not our market focus I believe that it is a big market. It is certainly a growing home school market in every state. Parents need affordable and high quality resources that are aligned to what the states standards are, so we would fit that need. It is just that it is a very fragmented market to work to penetrate, so our core competency continues to be focused on the 16,000 school districts in the United States.

**CEOCFO: *Is there anything you would like to make available that you do not have now?***

**Dr. Johnson:** At the present time, we are putting our full focus on the development of our PreKindergarten through twelfth grade curriculum, supplemental print materials, and hands on exploration kits. We are asked frequently to consider developing a Math product, but at the present time, we are not planning to do so.

**CEOCFO: *Accelerate Learning has been recognized with a number of awards. What is most meaningful for you?***

**Dr. Johnson:** We have received numerous awards including the Top 100 Products of 2013, a finalist in the Cool Tool Award, 2014 Revere Award, 2014 DILA Award and the SETA Leadership in Technology Award.

**CEOCFO: *Why pay attention to Accelerate Learning today?***

**Dr. Johnson:** We represent the highest quality curriculum and assessment materials, the lowest price in the market, effective professional development for teachers, and a fully DIGITAL alternative to

learning (or teaching). If you are teaching science in your school district and you want the highest quality materials that are most closely aligned to the objectives that you are required to teach, in a product that is most affordable, then you need Accelerate Learning.

**Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine**

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