



# DR. LEENA BAKSHI MCLEAN

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PRESS KIT

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## ABOUT

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Dr. Leena Bakshi McLean is the founder of STEM4Real, a nonprofit professional learning organization committed to combining STEM and standards-based (CCSS, NGSS, ELD) content learning and leadership with principles of equity and social justice. Dr. Bakshi McLean currently works with pre-service teachers at Claremont Graduate University teaching STEM methods and Universal Design for Learning. She also serves on the board of directors for the National Science Teaching Association as the Director of Multicultural/Equity in Science Education.



Dr. Bakshi McLean is a former county and state level administrator and mathematics, science and health teacher. Her research interests include Science/STEM education and figuring out how to create access and opportunities for each and every student regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or socioeconomic status.

## AS SEEN ON / IN

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# STEM4REAL IS KNOWN FOR SAYING...

- We're all about doing things #4Real.
- We believe in standards AND social justice, not standards OR social justice.
- We're not just a box you can check.
- When administrators fund the work, they buy into the work.
- We want teachers to become the CEOs of their own classrooms.
- We're not extra work; we're a community and we're here to support.
- Science is a way to inform, not weaponize.
- We want students to be able to see themselves in their lessons.
- Educators can make a difference and they don't have to rely on cookie-cutter curriculum to do it.

## INTERVIEW TOPICS

- How to Create Equitable Education for Every Student
- The Tell-Tale Signs Minority Students Are Suffering at Your School
- How Teachers Can Advocate for Professional Development to Their Administrators
- Why STEM Education Has to Be Rooted in Social Justice (and Teachers Need to Be Trained for It)
- Learning Loss Isn't Real But Learning Gaps Are: How to Find the Ones at Your School
- How to Cultivate an Anti-Racist Classroom
- 3 Ways to Get Teachers on Board with Anti-Racism and Social-Justice-Centered Professional Development
- What Culturally Responsive Teaching Is and How it Differs from Critical Race Theory
- How to Ditch Cookie-Cutter Curriculum for Lessons Plans that Relate to Your Students



# SUGGESTED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What's the inspiration behind the name, STEM4Real? What does it mean to you and your team to be #4real?
2. You were both a teacher and an administrator for years before pivoting to STEM4Real — what was the transition like to move from teaching in a school setting to training the ones doing the teaching?
3. Why is it so important for STEM4Real to combine standards with social justice as you develop and train teachers?
4. What would you recommend as a first step to someone who is seeking intersectional professional development for the first time?
5. You talk about the importance of having both content and pedagogical training for STEM teachers, in addition to leadership development. Why do those have to go hand in hand?
6. As someone who has been both a teacher and an administrator, you understand the unique challenges and opportunities for both. What blindspots does each position need to watch out for as they begin to engage in this type of work?
7. What would you say to an administrator who is apprehensive about getting their teachers on board with a school-wide professional development in this realm?
8. What's the number one mistake that teachers or administrators make when they engage with social-justice-centered professional development for the first time?
9. What would you say to a teacher who is without support in seeking out your type of professional development and feels incapable of making an impact on their own?
10. What are some of the deficits in K-12 STEM education that prevent all students having access to an equitable education?
11. How does racism most often show up in the classroom? What can teachers do about it?
12. Is there such a thing as "arriving" for teachers who are interested in dismantling their implicit bias and teach STEM for real? Why or why not?
13. You note that the school-to-STEM career pipeline is broken. How do we fix this as teachers and administrators? As parents?
14. What's next for the STEM4Real team?

# RAPID FIRE WITH DR. LEENA BAKSHI MCLEAN

**1. What's your first memory of STEM?**

*When I made solar ovens and noticed the black paper was going to attract more heat than white paper. Then we got to eat smores!*

**2. What's your favorite part of being a teacher?**

*The relationships with my students. I still stay in contact with them to this day. I can't believe they are old enough to drink alcohol now!*

**3. The most underrated teaching tool is...**

*Teachers observing each other. I wish schools and districts would build more time for that. I still remember learning so much just from observing my peers.*

**4. What's your favorite misconception about teachers?**

*That teachers just chill and relax in the summer. A lot of teachers are pursuing more professional learning, teaching summer school, or taking some much needed rest!*

**5. Tell us the #1 thing you say to exhausted or overwhelmed teachers.**

*REST is professional learning. Take time to lie down and when it gets really tough, think about your WHY. This helps me as we support our teachers.*

**6. What's your go-to pick-me-up treat while teaching?**

*Lattes! Every time someone on staff does a coffee run, I love treating myself to a delicious and sweet latte!*

**7. What you wish everyone knew about teachers...**

*They are your warriors. Teachers propel our entire society. All of our doctors, lawyers, engineers, and CEOs were all taught by teachers.*



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## MEDIA CONTACTS

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# PRAISE FOR STEM4REAL

“Bravo to STEM4Real! The curriculum writing for Walden West Science and Sustainability Center Field Trips is a collaborative effort between my staff and theirs. The lessons that they recreated are engaging and phenomena based as well as committed to the alignment of NGSS and 3D learning. They incorporated culturally responsive pedagogy and social justice into the outdoor-education world. We value their commitment to our program and to our students.”

— **MARIE BACHER,**

Director of Environmental Education,  
Walden West Outdoor School, Santa Clara County Office of Education

“The STEM4Real session was an excellent learning experience, modeling hands-on science explorations and sharing research-based approaches for designing engaging science lessons, as well as a range of strategies that included math integration and sentence starters for students in need of linguistic support.”

— **ELISA STONE, PHD,**

Executive Director, Berkeley Science and Math Initiative

“As a fairly new elementary school STEM teacher, I cannot even begin to describe how valuable Dr. Leena Bakshi of STEM4Real has been to our school and my teaching practice. Immediately after Dr. Bakshi’s demonstration in our classrooms, our students’ interest and excitement for learning was ignited and they couldn’t wait to dive deeper into the investigations and learn more about the concepts that were being taught. My experience with Dr. Bakshi has been completely invaluable and I will use what I have learned from her this year for many more years to come.”

— **DONNA SORIANO,**

K-6 STEM Specialist, Waianae Elementary School,  
Hawaii Department of Education

“STEM4Real goes above and beyond to create custom tailored professional learning progressions that are responsive to both the district’s and participants’ needs. Sessions meet participants exactly where they are at and push them forward in their work towards equitable outcomes for ALL students – where all truly means all. As a participant, STEM4Real facilitated my growth as an equity focused teacher leader and provided me with the tools needed to engage in the work. In short, STEM4Real leads by example and challenges participants to do the same.”

— **TARA SIKORSKI,**

NGSS Instructional Coach, HS Science Teacher,  
San Lorenzo Unified School District





ABOUT

## THE STEM4REAL TAILOR MADE PROGRAM

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Teachers need high-quality professional development that adequately prepares them to work with a diverse range of students. STEM4Real's Tailor Made program provides NGSS/STEM professional learning using lesson study, analysis of student work, and reflection, all grounded on tenets of social justice, equity and anti-racism, to current STEM teachers, those who are just entering the discipline or any who are struggling to close the opportunity gap between underrepresented minority students and their peers.

ABOUT

## THE STEM4REAL NETWORK

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The STEM4Real Network is a multifaceted community that provides a platform for educators to plan for equitable instruction, collaborate on pedagogy, and learn together in a global professional learning community. Educators will have the opportunity to network and collaborate nationally and internationally with fellow like-minded people committed to standards + justice.

ABOUT

## LEADERSHIP 4 JUSTICE

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Designed to provide extra support and facilitation to leadership teams, Leadership 4 Justice takes a look at systems thinking, leadership practices, relationship building, and equitable practices that support educational and social justice. Using our signature Recognize-Dismantle-Rebuild framework, leaders go deeper into anti-racism, antibias and diversity training. We help leaders craft their Vision 4 Justice and plan for how to actually implement it.