2023-2024 Lead Advocates

Christina Campos

West Oso Junior High School (Corpus Christi, TX)

Bio: Christina teaches STEM, PLTW, and Investigating Careers courses in grades 7th-8th at West Oso Junior High in Corpus Christi, Texas. She has been teaching at WOJH for five years. Christina graduated from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi with her bachelor's in Communications and Master of Science in Educational Technology and Instructional Design. Her hobbies include reading, researching, and spending time with her family.

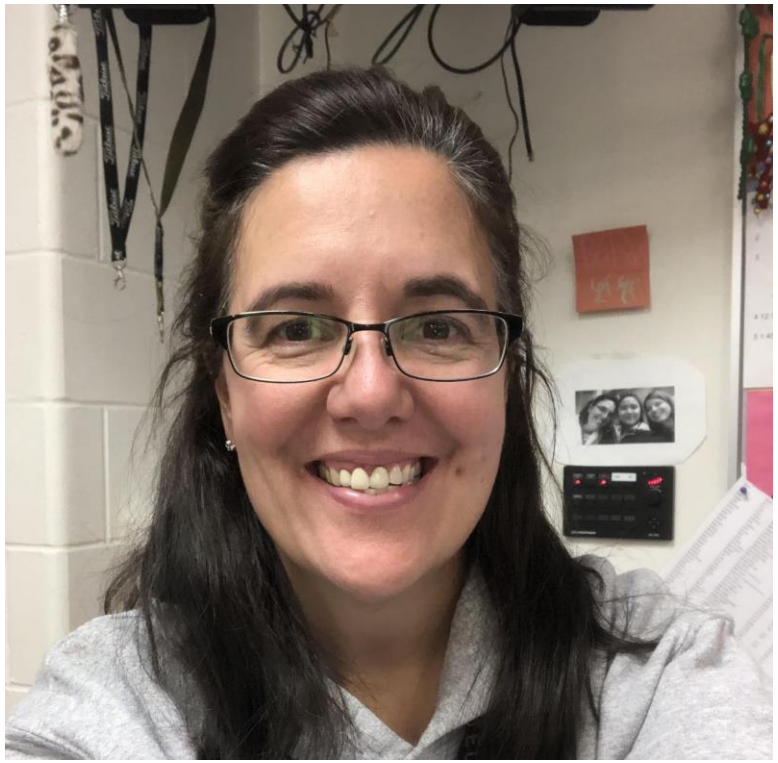
Quote: Being selected for the Society for Science Advocacy program provides an excellent opportunity to advocate for science and promote its importance to communities. Science plays a crucial role in our lives, and the program offers a platform to raise awareness and educate the public on various scientific issues. Networking and collaboration: The program allows connecting with like-minded individuals and collaborating on science advocacy projects. The partnership could lead to new ideas and strategies to promote science and science education. Professional development: Being part of the Society for Science Advocacy program offers professional development opportunities such as training, workshops, and mentoring. The program could help participants to develop their communication, leadership, and advocacy skills, which could be valuable in their future careers.

Loree Harvey

Monte Vista High School (Monte Vista, CO)

Bio: Loree Harvey has finished her 18th year with the Monte Vista School District, serving a primarily rural and economically poor minority student body. She teaches high school life sciences courses and a year-long student research course. Her undergraduate and graduate training is in wildlife biology and animal physiology; education has become a second beloved career. Her passion is research at all levels, and she continues to contract with federal land management agencies and uses these connections and opportunities to expose students to professional science.

Quote: I am thrilled to have been selected as a Lead Advocate by the Society for Science for the 2023-24 school year! This wonderful opportunity will enable me to serve as a mentor and leader for new Advocates and continue to develop my student research program within my school district. The Advocate program is helping to bring research opportunities to deserving, under-served students in our remote location. With this program, these students may be allowed to conduct authentic scientific research and develop to their fullest potential.



Merridith Joly

Gordon Parks High School (St. Paul, MN)

Bio: Merridith Joly has been a high school science educator since 1996, teaching in private, public, traditional, and alternative education settings. She has been a coach, advisor, and mentor to hundreds of students during her career. Her greatest joy has been helping students from underserved populations pursue their dreams, accomplish their goals, and believe in themselves. Merridith teaches biology, chemistry, and physical science at Gordon Parks High School in Saint Paul, MN.

Quote: Scientific curiosity must be supported, pursued, encouraged, and celebrated in all learners. The Society for Science supports this vital work and helps educators from all settings develop skills to make the impossible possible. Questioning and experimentation must be nurtured in our student populations to help solve tomorrow's problems.

Edwina Kinchington

Pittsburgh Science and Technology Academy (Pittsburgh, PA)

Bio: Edwina Kinchington received her BA from the University of California, Berkeley, in Molecular and Cellular Biology in 1991 and her Ph.D. in Pharmacology from the University of Pittsburgh in 1997. She focused on cancer research for almost 18 years before pursuing and obtaining her teaching certification in Biology from the University of Pittsburgh Department of Education. Edwina began her secondary education teaching career at the Pittsburgh Science and Technology Academy in Pittsburgh, PA, in 2009, where she presently teaches. She serves as the high school science department chair and the instructional teacher leader of the body and behavior concentration, which focuses on life sciences, biomedical technology, and AP Biology. She also coordinates SciTech's senior research program called Executive Experience. In 2015, she received the Pennsylvania Outstanding Biology Teacher Award from the National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT).

Quote: I believe the best way to learn science is by doing science - asking questions, testing your thinking, collecting data and figuring out what it means, making mistakes, and learning from them - that is how best to learn and LOVE science. Participating in the Advocate Program will help provide the skills, tools, and resources to engage our student population in Real World science through doing science and talking about it. I have witnessed firsthand the excitement and confidence students have gained with my experience as an advocate.

Mary Kennedy

Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park (Cleveland, OH)

Bio: Mary has been a high school science educator in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District for several years. She recently accepted a new role as the Education Director of the Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park this upcoming school year. Through this role, she can mentor underrepresented students through science research across Northeast Ohio.

Quote: I am thrilled to be able to lead a group of Advocates as they navigate their students through the infinitely valuable and rewarding experience of independent research.

Gaurang Limachia

GoSTEM (Chicago, IL)

Bio: Inspired by the mentorship Gaurang Limachia received as a student and its impact on him, he founded GoSTEM in 2017. As CEO, he leads a diverse team of professionals, students, and volunteers in fulfilling the mission. His organizational strategy and vision have allowed him to develop a financially sustainable plan that utilizes diverse funding streams. He has cultivated partnerships with external constituents, including Chicago Public Schools, local universities, and community organizations. Additionally, he has increased brand awareness through marketing campaigns, social media engagement, and fundraising. Before GoSTEM, Gaurang received a bachelor's of science from DePaul University and was a clinical research fellow at the National Institutes of Health. He conducted clinical trials and published a paper in the American Academy of Neurology. He enjoys talking to students about his research experience and motivating students to explore the world of research.

Ben Martin

St. Clair High School (St Clair, MO)

Bio: Ben Martin has been changing lives as a high school science teacher in rural Missouri for the past 15 years. He is the school's Science Coach, Cross Country coach, and has taken students to 44 different states. Outside of school, Ben is busy raising two future Nobel prize winning Olympians.

Quote: I am excited because the Advocate program draws attention to underserved students, those that might go overlooked otherwise. I also feel that sometime events like science fairs may not be highlighted in some schools and this program celebrates and further legitimizes the idea that science research and science competitions are important.

Eual Phillips

Hill-Freedman World Academy (Philadelphia, PA)

Bio: Eual Phillips is a renaissance systems thinker and educator who creatively applies his biomedical science background to repurposing laboratory experiments for high school students. Eual also uses his prior experience to show students how science is connected to every aspect of their present and future lives, including the evolution of their identities, beliefs, and values. Overall, Eual desires to raise up a generation of student scientists who see how their innovative research ideas can seismically shift society.

Quote: I'm enthusiastic about my selection as a returning Advocate. With our student population showing a heightened interest in STEM disciplines, I am more determined to equip them with the skills necessary to execute their personal research investigations.

Andre Pineda

Canyon Day Junior High School (Whiteriver, AZ)

Bio: Mr. Andre Pineda is a dedicated resource teacher at Canyon Day Jr High School, with a passion for teaching and a deep understanding of physics. He has over 25 years of experience in education and has dedicated his life to helping students learn and grow. His ability to explain complex concepts in simple terms, and his dedication to assisting students to succeed, has earned him a reputation as one of the best teachers in the school. He led the robotics and research program of his school. Mr. Pineda has always loved science, which led him to pursue a Ph.D. in Physics. He worked as a Material Science engineer at TDK Philippines and went on to work in a research facility for ten years. Mr. Pineda had a true passion for teaching and wanted to share his knowledge and expertise with others. He enjoys spending time with his family, reading books and science articles from Science News magazine, and engaging in community service.

Quote: I am excited to participate in the Advocate Program because I will have the opportunity to gain new knowledge and skills that can help me become a better research teacher. Through this research teacher institute, I will be exposed to new teaching methods, research-based strategies, and innovations in research teaching which can lead to improved teaching quality and better learning outcomes for students. This institute can also help me update my curriculum based on the latest research and knowledge in my research field. This can give students a more relevant, accurate, and up-to-date education. This institute can offer opportunities for teachers like me to enhance our research skills, leading to more accurate and reliable student research and better critical thinking skills. I will gain access to new resources such as educational technology, research databases, or professional networks, which can enable me to provide my students with more diverse and high-quality educational resources. Lastly, this program may provide teachers with access to mentorship opportunities, which can provide them with guidance and support as they navigate complex topics, leading to better student outcomes.

Heather Sims

Hobart High School (Hobart, OK)

Bio: Heather Sims traded fieldwork for the classroom to share her love of science with the next generation. She has a robust research background featuring 4+ years working with the USDA, the National Park Service, perovskite crystal synthesis at OU, and universities in multiple fields. After earning her MAT in science education, this is her fifth year teaching high school. She is passionate about cultivating science literacy and bringing real-world science problems into the classroom to contextualize curriculum for students.

Quote: I'm excited to build upon our successes last year (we had several teams qualify for the state science fair!) and provide this incredible opportunity for my students. It's a chance for my students to direct their learning and earn recognition for their efforts. Nothing is more effective at encouraging students to see themselves in STEM careers than first-hand experience in STEM research.

Melissa Sleeper

Holy Trinity Episcopal Academy (Melbourne, FL)

Bio: Melissa is a Nationally Board-Certified Teacher currently teaching 8th Grade Science in Vero Beach, Florida. She is the recipient of the Florida Association of Science Teachers 2022-23 Outstanding Middle School Science Teacher Award and serves on the NASA eClips Educator Advisory Board. She is the K-12 STEM Officer for the Cape Canaveral Section of the American Institute of Aeronautics & Astronautics. She is an enthusiastic science educator excited to be teaching the future colonists of other worlds!

Quote: Through the Advocate Program, I gave my students valuable experience conducting authentic scientific research. The participating students hope to continue their research even when they leave my classroom. The entire experience had them rethinking their career goals. They now envision themselves as future scientists and researchers.

John Wiley

Challenge School (Aurora, CO)

Bio: John Wiley is a passionate educator who has been teaching science for over 20 years. He uses science as a conduit to help students understand the world and their place in it. John teaches middle school science and Lego Robotics and leads students on experiential trips to wolf sanctuaries, national parks, and worldwide.

Quote: I am excited to take my passion for authentic science experiences to the next level and broaden the audience of students that engage in science competitions in my school. We are all scientists with different levels of training, and I plan on adding more students to the rosters of formal scientists in the future.

Jean Yoo

Almeria Middle School (Fontana, CA)

Bio: Mrs. Jean Yoo is teaching 8th Grade Physical Science in Fontana, CA. She started her career in education as a music teacher after the graduate program at USC. Being experienced in music and science, she is amazed at how harmoniously nature is organized.

Quote: Jean Yoo is an extraordinarily talented and dedicated teacher who is thoroughly committed to bringing science projects to her students that are thoughtful, educational, and inspirational to our students.

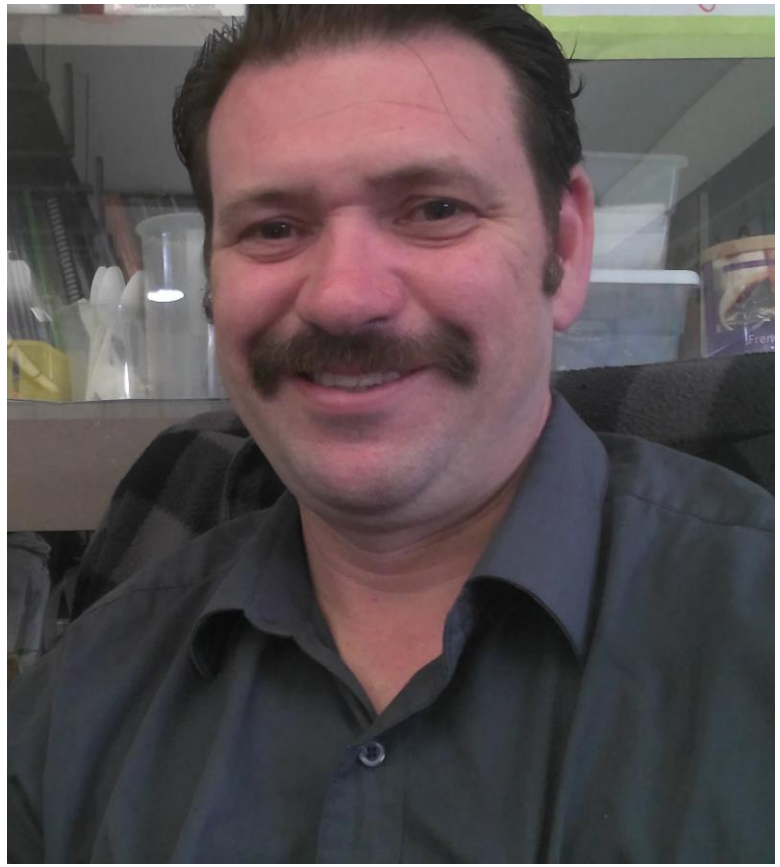
2023-2024 Advocates

Roy Adsit

Saipan Southern High School (Saipan, MP)

Bio: Working in many different jobs & careers before he started teaching High School Science more than 20 years ago gives Roy a unique perspective on the importance of education. That experience translates to both; the simple (why tardies count) things and the real-life examples he can draw that help his student relate to & understand science concepts. Roy starts each year with the same admonishment, "Show up, Do your Best. That is the best you can do and the least I will except“

Quote: It is easy to overlook the science behind everything in our lives today. Even the obvious links between basic science research & the technology that comes from it are obscured. This program will put science back at the forefront of students' minds.

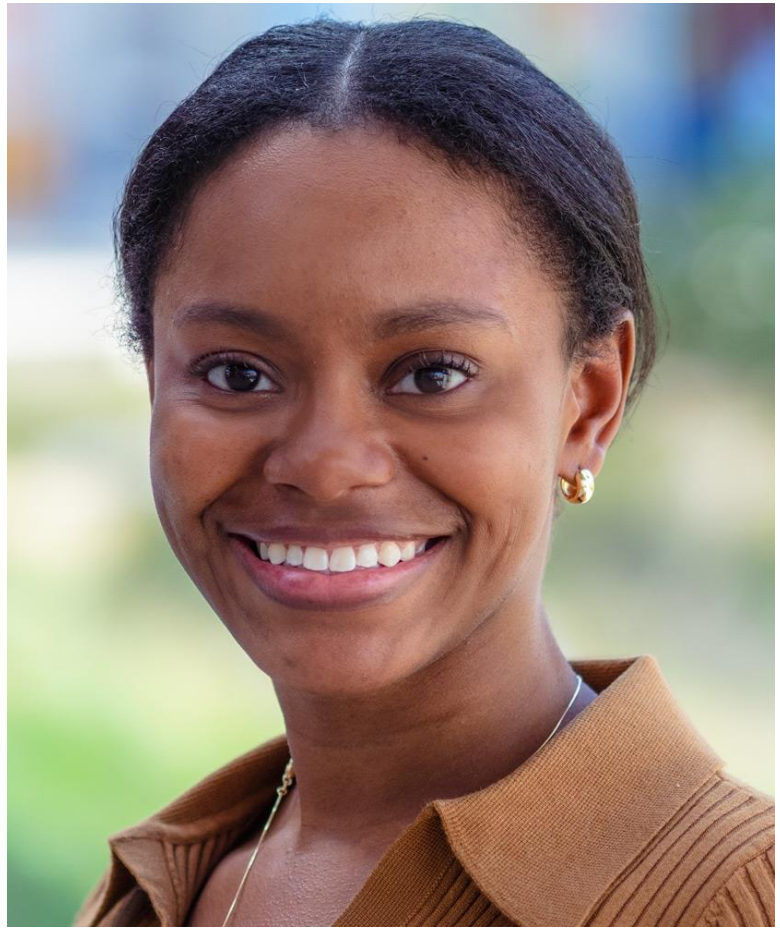


Lance Atkinson

Eisenhower High School (Rialto, CA)

Bio: Lance has been teaching for several years at Eisenhower High School in Rialto, CA. As a Physics teacher, he loves to involve students in hands-on, practical science. Lance has led multiple professional development trainings as a department chair and conference speaker. Ever an enthusiast for education, he has earned a Master's degree and is working toward his Doctorate in Education.

Quote: The Advocate program by Society for Science has been an excellent motivator for me and my students. After one year in the program, our school has already established an annual school site fair that we can share with the student body and community.



Iesha Baldwin

Georgia Institute of Technology (Atlanta, GA)

Bio: Iesha is a passionate sustainability consultant eager to connect students in underserved communities with research opportunities! With a strong research background and experience in advanced manufacturing and logistics, Iesha specializes in developing innovative solutions for sustainable business practices. In addition, she is committed to advocating for science through community development and outreach programs, using her knowledge to educate and inspire others to make positive changes for the planet. With her unique skillset and unwavering dedication to sustainability, Iesha significantly impacts sustainability and science.

Quote: As an advocate for science in underserved communities, I am excited to spark curiosity, ignite passion, and empower the next generation of scientists. By sharing my knowledge and providing resources, I can help bridge the gap and unlock the potential of every student, regardless of their background or circumstance. Together, we can create a brighter future for science and society.

Aishat Balogun

Bloomington High School North (Bloomington, IN)

Bio: Aishat likes to create multiple opportunities for students to extend STEM outside the school/classroom curriculum. She is a 9th - 12th-grade science teacher at Bloomington High School in Bloomington, Ind. Her interests include science education; STEM; and the intersection of technology, learning, and its application to education.

Quote: I am grateful because this will allow me to extend more opportunities to my students.

Stephen Beall

City High School (Tucson, AZ)

Bio: Steve teaches biology, science and engineering practices, and natural history at City High School in downtown Tucson, AZ. He is also an adjunct life science instructor at Pima Community College. During his teaching career, Steve spent many summers doing educational and technical research at the University of Arizona, and these experiences have made him passionate about getting students involved in original scientific research. This is Steve's second year in the Advocate Program. He enjoys cycling, hiking, kayaking, and gardening in his free time.

Quote: I am fortunate to be returning as an Advocate for a second year. My involvement will help continue my goal to make original science research part of the culture at City High School. Conducting independent science research is a fantastic way for students to learn the nature of science and develop writing, oral presentation, creative thinking, and problem-solving skills.

Rachana Bhonsle

Colleton County High School (Walterboro, SC)

Bio: Bhonsle is a passionate STEM teacher who has a deep understanding of the subject matter and can inspire and engage students in learning about STEM disciplines. Rachana has taught secondary science subjects, specifically Chemistry and Biology, for 24 years and has been a robotics lead coach for the after-school robotics program. Rachana takes pride in treating her students as individuals and providing them with opportunities to become independent, enthusiastic learners so that they not only learn critical scientific concepts but also become well-rounded individuals ready for their future. As a STEM teacher, Rachana is committed to the success of her students. Rachana would like to positively contribute to the STEM education field and build a robust professional learning community that strives to achieve similar goals as hers. She is enthusiastic about the latest developments and breakthroughs in the STEM field and is always eager to share her knowledge and expertise with her students. She is willing to go the extra mile to help students struggling with the subject matter, and she is always available to answer questions or provide extra support outside of class. She is knowledgeable and skilled in her subject matter and can inspire and motivate students to pursue their interests and passions in STEM fields.

Quote: By becoming a part of the Advocate Program, I hope to develop the necessary skills to support my students to participate in STEM research competitions confidently. I look forward to receiving training and mentoring from the Society for Science Advocate Program lead advocates.

Humberto Bracho

Peralta Hacienda Historical Park (Oakland, CA)

Bio: Humberto(Beto) works with students in Oakland and East Palo Alto, California. He supports youth research groups in investigating their community health through environmental research. Beto has established relationships with Stanford University, UC Berkeley, and the City of Oakland to support research in water and air quality by middle school students.

Quote: I am excited to be an Advocate for the Society for Science because it drives me to provide my students with the best science research experience. The role allows me to search out opportunities and relationships with universities and city agencies that I might only establish with support. This year I brought students to work at a Lab at Stanford University, and I only see more opportunities ahead.

Karen Bruening

Pensacola High School (Pensacola, FL)

Bio: Karen is beginning her 8th year at Pensacola High School in Pensacola, Florida, for the 2023-24 school year and will be sponsoring the nationally-ranked Pensacola High School Engineering Team for the 7th year. Additionally, she will be continuing a 3-year research partnership with the University of Florida NHERI Powell Lab Boundary Layer Wind Tunnel. Karen earned her Bachelor's degree in Marine Biology in 2001 and her Master's degree in Environmental Science in 2012, both at the University of West Florida. Karen has sponsored several students doing research competitions, even taking one pair of students to ISEF in 2022. Karen's goal this year is to grow the student science community at Pensacola High School through the Engineering Team by sponsoring outreach activities with both middle school and elementary school students and involving students from traditional science classes, pre-IB and IB (International Baccalaureate) students, and the schools system's manufacturing academy.

Quote: I am thrilled that I am going to be a Society for Science Advocate next school year! I have been slowly getting more into helping students with research projects, and having the chance to be mentored by someone with experience in this adventure will be invaluable to my future goals as a teacher and to my students, who will be discovering that they CAN do tremendous things. I want to leave my students with an incurable curiosity and a thirst for learning that will serve them for life in whatever field they choose!

Jerry Cantrell

Seminole High School (Seminole, FL)

Bio: Jerry has over 30 years of experience working as a biomedical or electrical engineer in military, educational, and business environments. As a Top 10 Teacher for Pinellas County Schools and as the lead Sustainable Engineering Academy (SEA) educator, Jerry utilizes these experiences to promote student growth and learning. The SEA provides a robust, rigorous learning environment to increase student achievement. Students benefit from an engaging learning environment as they become critical thinkers through researching, prioritizing, maintaining, and completing objectives established within their capstone projects, and they compete in Science and Engineering Fairs.

Quote: As with all efforts, student growth and educational enrichment are essential aspects of the learning environment. As an Advocate, I will improve the ability to promote the advancement of science and engineering through STEM education. Through the resources available as an Advocate, opportunities for students to become successful in their research will also improve. As with all efforts, student growth and educational enrichment are essential to the learning environment.

Jeffrey Charles

Del Valle Middle School (Del Valle, TX)

Bio: Jeffrey fell in love with teaching while serving as a tutor in the literacy first AmeriCorps program after college. He teaches 6th-grade science in Del Valle, TX, outside Austin Area. His primary focus over the past couple of years has been to advocate and provide opportunities for his students to reach their full potential. He hopes to instill curiosity in his students through STEM and help them achieve their potential. His goals as an educator are to show his students their worth and create a path of opportunity for all of them.

Quote: I am excited to be selected for the advocate program this year. As an Advocate, I will be able to learn and discover opportunities that I can offer to my students to engage their curiosity in STEM.

Janirette Chaves

River Springs Middle School (Orange City, FL)

Bio: Janirette is a passionate science teacher with a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Evaluation of Biology. She is a former US ARMY CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear) Sergeant, Federal Correctional Officer, and State Correctional Facility Biology Teacher. Janirette moved from Puerto Rico to Florida in 2017 and teaches Science to 6th graders and coaches cross country. Over the past years, she has led students to Tomoka Regional Science and Engineering Fair; Ms. Chaves looks forward to promoting critical thinking and scientific investigations in Middle School students.

Quote: Imagination is in every human being, and guidance is humanity's responsibility. You can have millions of ideas and not know how to bring them to reality, and here is when an advocate takes the role. I am excited to be part of a world-changing program. Teachers are the real influencers.

Gemma Clarke

Chesapeake Math & IT Academy High School (Laurel, MD)

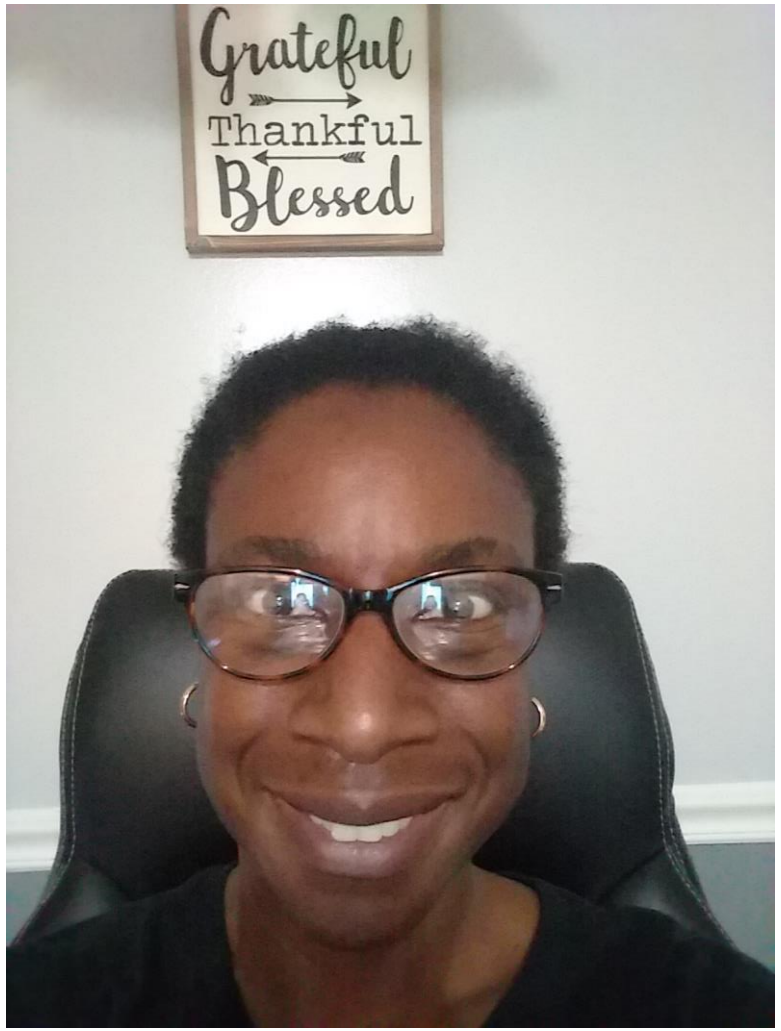
Bio: Gemma is a secondary 7-12 science teacher presently assigned as STEM Program Coordinator in our school. As a teacher, she launched different STEM programs, including a STEM Fair. Although Gemma's district does not mandate that Grades 9-12 to do a STEM fair project, she has been able to encourage students to participate. Gemma intends to improve students' comprehension of scientific inquiry by assisting them in conceptualizing it as a process of posing questions about phenomena, conducting research to obtain answers, and formulating hypotheses based on data.

Quote: Students' confidence is boosted by participating in competitions and partaking in research instruction to assess what they have done and learned. When students experience support, comfort, and attention, it makes me extremely satisfied. My intention is to show my students, not just tell them, that anything is possible for them to accomplish with hard work and devotion. Additionally, I want to create a safe environment where investigation success is celebrated with the same zeal as cooperation and empathy. I sincerely believe that by proving through research and experiments, I can help students realize their full potential.

Philip Clarke

Centennial High School (Gresham, OR)

Bio: After immigrating from the UK and becoming a public school teacher in Oregon, Philip created a Computer Science and Engineering program of study in his school district. The program now involves computer science, robotics, and cyber security classes, ranging from introductory explorations to college-level courses. He also hosts an after-school engineering club that competes in multiple competitions yearly.



Rachel Collins

Woodbridge Middle School (Woodbridge, VA)

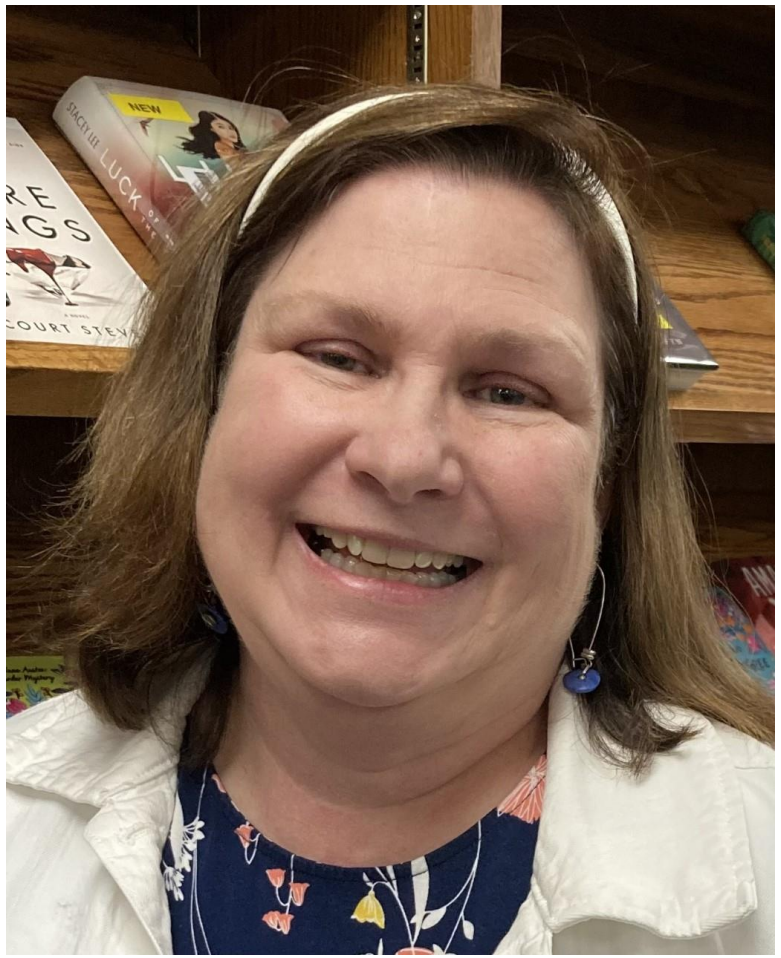
Bio: Rachel is a veteran teacher who graduated from the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia. She had humble beginnings in small-town Virginia as an elementary school, then transitioned to middle school science. She has a love of children and a passion for science. In her free time, she spends time with her family and writes creatively.

Quote: "Education is not the learning of facts but training the mind to think." -Albert Einstein "Success is liking yourself, liking what you do, and liking how you do it." - Maya Angelou

Renee Cordes

Flathead High School (Kalispell, MT)

Bio: Renee became passionate about research as an undergraduate at the University of Notre Dame. With a dual degree in Biology and English, she appreciates the need to approach scientific problems and communicate the results effectively and creatively. Renee has shared her wonder of the natural world with high school students since 1997. She loves helping students realize science is not just a collection of facts. It is a way of thinking and looking at the world. Renee encourages her students to dream big; their contributions can help address many of today's challenging issues.



Ann Marie Cowan

Hiram High School (Hiram, GA)

Bio: Ann Marie is a science teacher with 32 years of experience instructing students from grades six through twelve in the Earth, Life, and Physical Sciences. She has experience teaching in public, private, and magnet schools in Georgia and South Carolina. Outside the classroom, she has written curriculum and coordinated programs for Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth in partnership with NASA's Jet Propulsion Lab. Ann Marie teaches Literacy focused Environmental Science and Honors Biology at Hiram High School, where she has shared her love of science since 2000. She has a BS in Biology from the College of Charleston, an M.Ed. in Science from The Citadel, and a Specialist Degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Piedmont College. She is a Gifted and STEM-certified teacher. Ms. Cowan was the 2005 Paulding County Teacher of the Year.

Quote: Participating in the Advocate Program allows my student to engage in scientific research. Many of my students will be first-generation college students. They need to realize that this dream can become a reality, and it is essential to prepare them to succeed. Entering Science and STEM competitions gives students experiences where they can grow and reach their full potential.

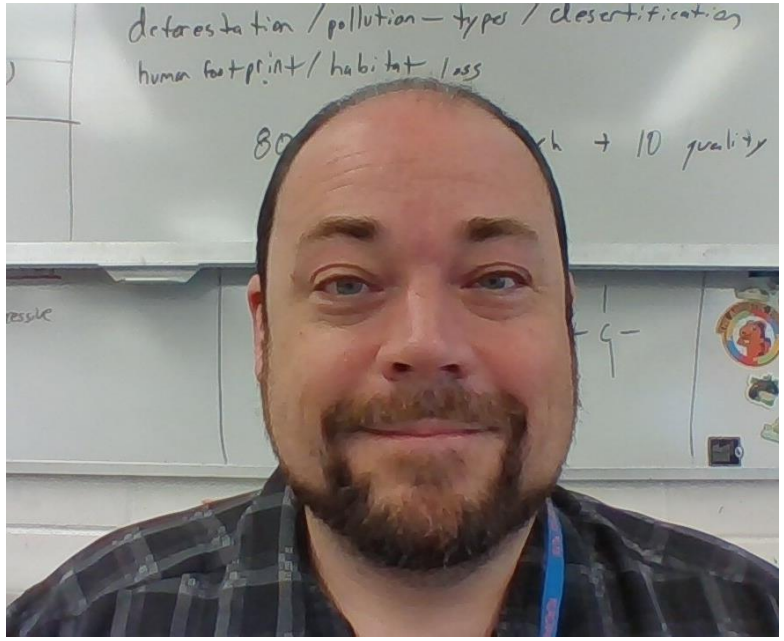
Kelly Cox

Forest Grove Middle School (Worcester, MA)

Bio: Kelly is a Middle School Science educator in Worcester, MA. Finishing up her 12th year working in urban schools, she continues to seek ways to provide additional opportunities for students. Eager to be part of this program, Kelly hopes to continue to grow her STEM Fair Club, an after-school program.

Steven Craig

Southeast High School (Bradenton, FL)



Bio: Steven has been an educator for over 20 years in Manatee County. He has degrees in Biology, Educational Leadership, and Educational Technology. In addition to teaching and running the Science Fair, he helps students with other science competitions and has been a Key Club Advisor for eight years.

Quote: I have loved the science fair since I first had students compete. Watching them get excited about explaining their ideas and processes, watching them plan what they'll do next time, and seeing their improvement over time makes me keep coming back.

Laura Cruz-Gomez

Fannin Middle School (Grand Prairie, TX)

Bio: Laura is a science teacher at the International Newcomer Institute at Fannin Middle School. She has four years of formal teaching experience at Grand Prairie ISD. As a newcomer teacher, Laura promotes an appreciation for linguistic and cultural diversity. As an immigrant born and raised in El Salvador, she is committed to providing opportunities for minority ESL students to engage in STEM fields through extracurricular activities such as coding, robotics, and scientific research.

Quote: I am excited about being selected as an Advocate because research projects provide an incredible opportunity for students to explore and showcase their curiosity and creativity. Science is all about discovery and innovation, and I can't wait to see the incredible ideas my students come up with.

Jennifer Dahlstrom

Bronx Lab School (Bronx, NY)

Bio: Jennifer has taught science in New York City public schools since 2008. She is passionate about sparking students' curiosity and interest in science through inquiry and believes that there is a scientist in every student. When she's not teaching, she can be found chasing fireflies in the Catskills or pulelehua on the slopes of Mauna Loa.

Quote: In many high schools nationwide, science research is regarded as a selective course for high-achieving students. This perception often results in disparities and underrepresentation of BIPOC and low-income students in STEM. I am excited to work as an Advocate to counter this perception and showcase my students' unique perspectives and voices through their authentic, original science research that reflects their experiences in the world.

Emily Dawson

Mark Bills Middle School (Peoria, IL)

Bio: Emily is a National Board-Certified Special Education Teacher with Peoria Public Schools in Peoria, Illinois. In addition to a bachelor's degree in special education, she has master's degrees in STEM education and Autism. She is the Past President and President-Elect of the Illinois Junior Academy of Science. She has a passion for science research and bringing opportunities to the students in the Peoria area and throughout Illinois.

Quote: Being selected as Society for Science Advocate will bring much-needed science research support and resources to the students of Mark Bills and Peoria Public Schools. This opportunity will open doors for our students that they haven't had before in STEM.

Geizi Dejka

San Juan College High School (Farmington, NM)

Bio: Geizi teaches High School Biology at San Juan College High School in Farmington, NM, located within the four corners region of the country where the states of NM, AZ, CO, and UT meet. Geizi, born and raised in the Philippines, moved to the country in 2008 to fill a long-time teaching vacancy in a small rural school in the heart of the Navajo Reservation. SJCHS, where she now teaches, serves four school districts within San Juan County, which makes the campus very diverse and unique. Geizi finds Science very exciting and fascinating and has encouraged numerous students in her school to create a unique study incorporating the Nature of Science with the Scientific Process. She has assisted students in competing in several local Science Fair events throughout the years & seeing them enjoying Science, and research has always been her pride and joy.

Quote: I am very excited to network with fellow educators who aim to bring more research opportunities to our schools outside of big and popular cities. Getting professional and financial support to fuel this endeavor will enable us to witness more "eureka" moments in our students' faces, provide them with guided pathways to Science research and maybe develop a passion for pursuing careers in STEM. As a teacher in a small town big in sports and other non-science extracurricular activities, I want to learn how to increase students' participation in Science research competitions.

Marifi Doculan

Marianas High School (Saipan, MP)

Bio: Marifi is a dedicated mentor to students and teachers alike. Her work highlights potential among her students, knowing that the best research gems are out there; they need to be polished. She busies herself with teaching and learning, and if she has spare time, she bakes the cutest and yummiest mini-macs on the island.

Quote: No one ceases to be curious. Only when we stop wondering do we stop learning!

Elizabeth Donaldson

Marfa High School (Marfa, TX)

Bio: Elizabeth has been a secondary science teacher for over ten years, teaching in small West Texas school districts. She grew up always knowing that science was her future. Elizabeth grew up at McDonald Observatory and spent her summers star gazing and camping, helping to mold her love of science. Today she shares her love of science with her students and looks to foster their futures in science-based fields.

Quote: I am pleased beyond measure to be an advocate for The Society for Science this year! I plan to involve the other small West Texas school districts in this stellar organization and their quest for developing young scientific minds.

Michele Drayton

Richard T Crane Medical Preparatory High School (Chicago, IL)

Bio: Michele has been a Lead Chemistry Teacher for 7 years and a Biomedical Innovation Teacher for 4 years at Richard T. Crane Medical Preparatory HS in Chicago

Chance Duncan

Russellville High School (Russellville, AR)

Bio: Chance teaches Advanced Biology, PLTW Medical Interventions, and Marine Biology at Russellville High School in Russellville, AR. He has taught for 15 years and resides in the community of Dardanelle, AR. In addition to having a passion for engaging students in scientific inquiry and enhancing their critical thinking and skeptical skills, Chance spends his free time on his bike or hiking some of the many trails in the area.

Quote: According to one of my personal heroes, Dr. Neil deGrasse Tyson: "Science literacy is a vaccine against the charlatans of the world who would exploit your ignorance." I work very hard to promote critical thinking and enhance my students' science literacy, regardless of the content we're investigating. I believe the Advocate Program will provide me with the resources and support I will need to take the next step and not only engage in research but put themselves out there and pit their projects against others from around the country. We must work tirelessly to continue advancing our understanding of the natural world to ensure we have a safe place to exist.

Patricia Dunne

Baldi Middle School (Philadelphia, PA)

Bio: Patricia received her Bachelor's in Environmental and Conservation Biology in 2010 from Philadelphia University. She spent the next ten years as an environmental educator for organizations such as the Philadelphia Water Department and Awbury Arboretum. During this time, Patricia developed a passion for public education. In 2022 she received her Masters of Education and now teaches environmental science in the Philadelphia School District.

Quote: I have seen firsthand how robust participation in scientific competitions can be for middle schoolers. Through the support of this program, I am excited to create a new pathway for my students to participate in such competitions.

Ryne Emerick

Lebanon High School (Lebanon, MO)

Bio: Ryne is entering his 14th year of teaching at Lebanon High School, MO. He received his Bachelor of Science in Wildlife Management from the College of the Ozarks. He went on to earn his Master of Science in Biology from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. Throughout his teaching career, Ryne has taught various subjects, including physical sciences, life science, and environmental science. He is particularly passionate about guiding students through independent research projects, which have resulted in success at local, state, and international science fairs. His students have also published their research in various student journals. Ryne, a science educator, has garnered several awards for his contributions to the field. He was honored as the Lebanon R3 Secondary Teacher of the Year in 2020 and was twice awarded the Senior Division Grand Prize Teacher Award at the Ozark Science and Engineering Fair. In 2022, he was named the Science Coach Teacher of the Year. In addition, Ryne has brought in over $37,000 in scholarships, grants, and cash from research competitions since the inception of the LHS research class in 2019 and has been selected as a Society for Science STEM Advocate for both 2022 and 2023.

Quote: I am thrilled and honored to be selected as a Society for Science STEM Advocate. This opportunity will allow me to expand my existing resources and opportunities to my students and help them achieve their full STEM potential. I can't wait to see how this will impact their learning and future careers.

David Esparza

Transmountain Early College High School (El Paso, TX)

Bio: David is a biology teacher at Transmountain Early College High School. He has three years of biomedical research experience before teaching and has his masters in teaching life sciences. He uses his education and experience to serve his students best and introduce them to the exciting world of research.

Quote: I am excited to be selected as an Advocate to gain more knowledge and skills to become a source of exposure to scientific research. This includes experiencing project ownership, presenting opportunities to compete, and sparking interest in STEM careers.

Velicia Everett

Sampson Middle School, (Clinton, NC)

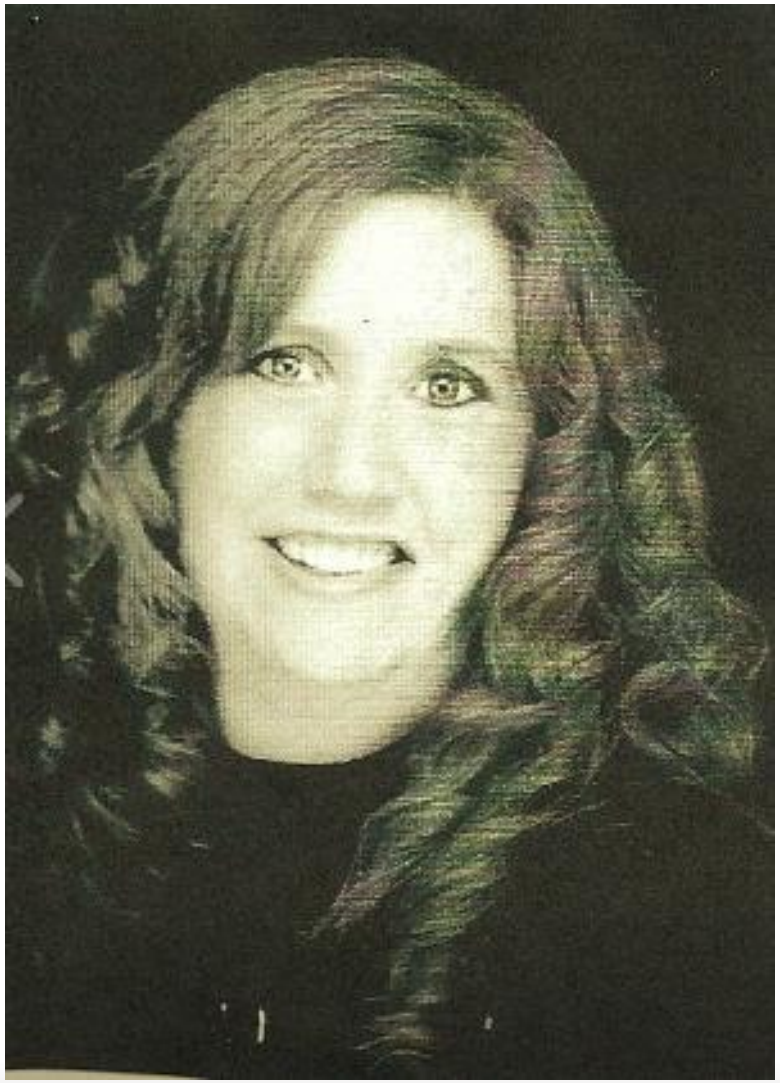
Bio: Velicia is a teacher of Middle Grades Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. She holds a Bachelor's in Accounting and a Master's in Middle Grades and Curriculum & Instruction-Mathematics. She is the proud daughter of Retired Staff Sergeant First Class George T. Everett I and the late Vernetta Everett.

Susie Fisher

Tongue River Middle School (Ranchester, WY)

Bio: Susie Fisher is starting her ninth year teaching science. She teaches seventh/eighth-grade science at a small public middle school in Wyoming. She loves rock climbing, paddle boarding, running, yoga, and anything outdoors in her free time!

Quote: I am excited about this opportunity because it will allow me to bring more science research to my students. Students are naturally curious and love learning, especially about topics they are passionate about. If I can play a small part in helping a student find their career path or passion, then I have met my goal.



Shauna Garbe

Barratt Elementary School (American Fork, UT)

Bio: Shauna Garbe has been teaching elementary students for ten years. She currently teaches sixth-grade science at Barratt Elementary. Shauna believes that science is exciting and everyone can be successful in science. She is passionate about getting students excited about science and interested in careers in science, especially those unrepresented in science.

Quote: I am very excited to have this opportunity to mentor students in my school. Many students may need more time to look at a phenomenon or a problem in the world and research it, let alone conduct experiments and submit their findings publicly. I hope to remedy that. I want to give students a chance to see how fun and exciting science can be and how it can positively impact their lives.

Alaina Garza

Clear Brook High School (Friendswood, TX)

Bio: Alaina Garza is a passionate science teacher at a diverse, suburban Houston high school. During her 16 years in the classroom, she has guided numerous students through designing, experimenting, and presenting their science and engineering fair projects at district and international competitions. When not at her children's various sporting events, she can be found working in her pollinator garden, finding peace with her hands in the soil.

Quote: Being selected as an Advocate will open many doors for my students. I am excited to collaborate with other Advocates on best practices to help all students excel in their research.

Jennifer Gentry

Vanderbilt Collaborative for STEM Education and Outreach (Nashville, TN)

Bio: Jennifer Gentry is a former research scientist in immunology and neuroscience with twenty years of education experience. In her role as an educator at the Collaborative for STEM Outreach and Education (CSEO) at Vanderbilt University, she has worked with middle and high school science coaches, teachers, and students at Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) to help develop engaging learning experiences that incorporate scientific technologies and data to allow students to appreciate better the role that science plays in their lives. Building confidence in students through learning is an essential component of her teaching philosophy, with the ultimate goal of leading students to experience the joy of discovery through science in the world around them.

Kimberly Gonzalez

Westminster High School (Westminster, CA)

Bio: Kimberly Gonzalez is a Westminster High School teacher with 20 years of teaching experience. She has taught integrated science and biology and teaches AP Environmental Science and Environmental Science. As the current Co-Coordinator of MERITS, the school's premier STEAM program, she is dedicated to encouraging more students to participate in STEAM projects, competitions, and community outreach.

Quote: I am thrilled to be selected as an Advocate for Society of Science's Advocate Program. This opportunity will allow me to better support my students in finding and navigating science competitions, inspiring their scientific curiosity and providing them with valuable skills and experience needed for success in the many different STEAM fields. I am excited to see how their participation in various competitions will positively impact their academic and career paths.

Christina Griffis

Putnam Academy of Arts and Sciences (Palatka, FL)

Bio: Christina Griffis is a talented and dedicated teacher who goes above duty to ensure her students master science skills. From tutoring after school daily (and twice a month on Saturdays) to being in constant contact with parents, Christina works tirelessly to ensure students grasp the nature of science. She helps her students stay organized and work more efficiently by teaching them computer and research skills. She is a dedicated mentor to middle school students, serving as robotics coach on three robotics Teams (First Lego League, MATE ROV, and Battle Bots), civics debate coach, CPR, and first aid instructor for both staff and students, as well as an IT software specialist for her school.

Quote: I am excited and honored to have been chosen as an Advocate Program. It is essential that I set an example for my students. Learning is never-ending, and we can achieve anything if we only try. As an Advocate, my students can witness my ability to put words into action**.**

Jennifer Gwilt

Glenn W. Levey Middle School (Southfield, MI)

Bio: Jennifer Gwilt is a STEAM teacher at Levey Middle School in Southfield, MI. She spent most of her career as a high school math, biology, and computer science teacher. In November 2019, she decided to change and took a position at a STEAM middle school. She has been building the STEAM program ever since. Students can engage in projects using various robots, drones, hydroponics, underwater ROVs, carpentry tools, t-shirt printing equipment, laser cutters, CNC mini mill routers, and electronics. Along with coordinating and participating in robotics and drone competitions with her students, Jennifer coordinates the House System and Amazing Shake competition at Levey, which focuses on educating and challenging students to improve their soft skills (handshake, eye contact, introductions, conversation, and interview skills).

Quote: I have always sought ways to engage our students in more authentic projects with an audience outside of the school walls. The Advocate program is that piece that I was missing. A group that can teach and push me to extend our focus to challenges and competitions outside of our local community.

Cameron Hall

Caddo Parish Magnet High School (Shreveport, LA)

Bio: Cameron Hall is a 7th year science teacher from Louisiana. She earned both a Bachelor of Science in Animal Science and a Master of Science in Biology at Louisiana Tech University. Before teaching, she was studying Human Cytomegalovirus in a graduate laboratory. She has two beautiful children with her husband of 5 years.

Sondra Harris

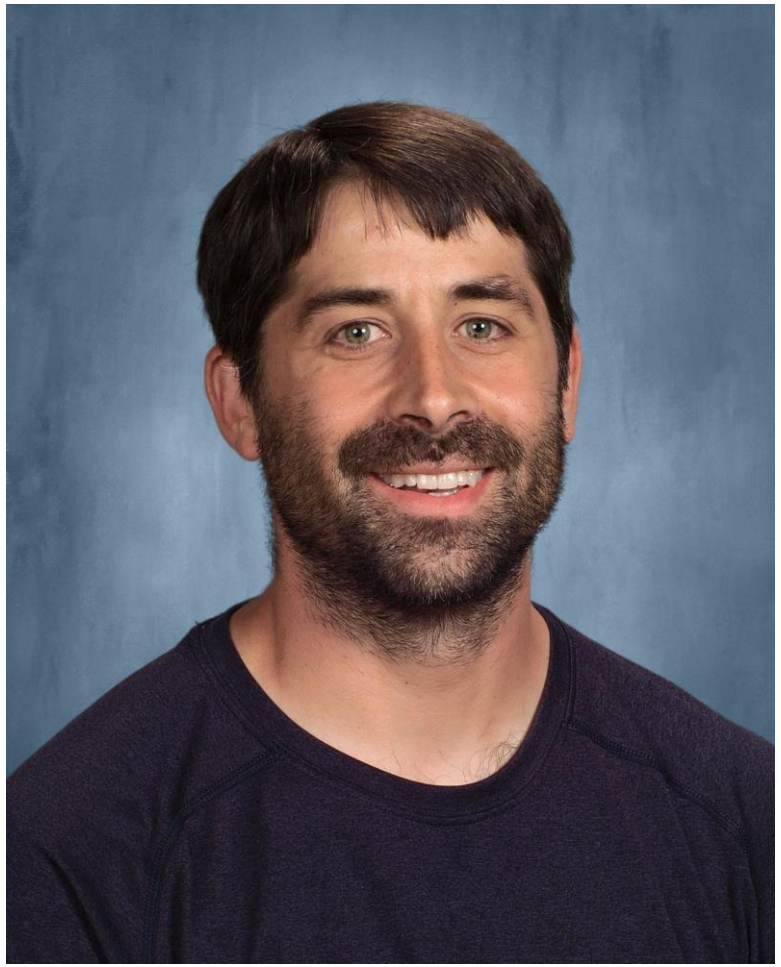
Indiana Math and Science Academy West (Indianapolis, IN)

Bio: Sondra Harris lives in a suburb outside of Indianapolis. She is originally from upstate New York. Currently, she works at a charter school teaching sixth- through eighth- grade science. Much of her day is spent mentoring her middle school science students with science fair projects. This is a full commitment of time and energy but has resulted in student success that has made the task rewarding.

Quote: It is rewarding to see the growth of my students in the area of science. I am in a unique position that allows me to teach them for three years. Seeing my students become more confident through their science fair participation is impactful as an educator. This collaboration will allow me to have a more significant impact on my students.

Samuel Hartpence

Pathfinder High School (Lander, WY)



Bio: Samuel Hartpence was born in Gillette, WY, and raised in Custer, SD. In high school, he competed in state physics competitions and, at the lower levels, in Odyssey of the Mind. He first attended Montana State University-Billings and got his bachelor's of science in mathematics and also fulfilled the requirements to become a teacher. He worked as an undergraduate researcher under the Montana Space Grant Consortium. He taught for two years but returned to college and got his B.S. in civil engineering from Montana State University. He was a practicing civil engineer for several years, becoming a licensed professional engineer in Wyoming. The opportunity came up to return to the classroom in 2014, and he has since taught math, environmental science, computer science, and integrated science. Samuel is passionate about science and inspires his students to pursue their curiosity.

Quote: I am excited to be part of the advocate program. Having students investigate phenomena they are interested in, collect data, analyze, and make predictions, connects so many classroom concepts to tangible observations and outcomes from their investigations that the experience leads to deeper and more meaningful learning. On top of that, students gain experience with presentations and interviews. This helps students in any career and at every level. Clearly and concisely communicating will help my students well beyond the classroom.

Jennifer Hatch

Medomak Valley High School (Waldoboro, ME)

Bio: Jennifer Hatch is a science teacher who has taught at Medomak Valley High School for ten years. She currently teaches biology, genetics, anatomy and physiology, and a research methods course. She lives with her husband, two young daughters, ages five and two, and a dog in the midcoast of Maine.

Quote: I am excited to participate in the Advocate program for a second year. Connecting with teachers allows me to help support students in doing meaningful research projects. Just because we live in a rural area doesn't mean we are disconnected from our world. We have to be a bit more creative about finding opportunities to do science.

Dede Henderson

South Hamilton Jr./Sr High School (Jewell, IA)

Bio: Dede Henderson works with kindergarten through twelfth-grade students in a rural school in central Iowa. She primarily works with gifted students and helps with intervention groups. She has taken students to the State Science and Technology Fair of Iowa for two years and had students qualify for the Thermo Fisher Scientific Junior Innovators Challenge this year. She loves encouraging and supporting students in science competitions.

Quote: My students did well at the State Science and Technology Fair of Iowa this year, and because of that, they are more excited about science and science competitions.

Toni Ireland

Centennial High School (Ellicott City, MD)

Bio: Toni Ireland is a GT resource teacher who teaches advanced research at Centennial High School in Howard County, MD. There are two courses in the Advanced Research Program: Independent Research and Intern/Mentor; both are college-level research courses, and Intern/Mentor includes a professional internship. Toni has been teaching in Howard County for 30 years and has been a secondary English teacher, an instructional coach, and a GT resource teacher.

Quote: As a strong proponent of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in my school system, I was eager to increase participation for traditionally underrepresented demographics in advanced-level classes and scientific research. I have a unique opportunity to work with school colleagues to broaden the scope and ease of access to science competitions in my high school, and it was important to me to go beyond just talking about how important diversity is in science and, instead, work to do something about it.

Sunday Iwalaiye

Laurel High School (Laurel, MD)

Bio: Sunday Iwalaiye has been a veteran high school and college science educator for the last 30 years in Nigeria, The Gambia, and the United States. He has a doctoral degree in science education from Morgan State University. He is committed to working with and encouraging minority and underrepresented students to venture into STEM careers. He is widely traveled. His hobbies are traveling, learning new skills, and following global affairs.

Quote: Minority and underrepresented students will be interested in STEM careers if exposed to science fair competitions.

Kaleena Jedinak

Tybee Island Maritime Academy (Tybee Island, GA)

Bio: Kaleena Jedinak is a K-8 Research Teacher at Tybee Island Maritime Academy in Tybee Island, GA. She has been an educator for 18 years and teaching research for seven years. She truly enjoys facilitating student-centered research projects with her middle school students as it encourages them to pursue their interests in fields of science that they enjoy.

Quote: I am excited to be a part of the Society for Science Advocate Program this year because it will allow me to connect with other teachers around the country, striving to provide meaningful research experiences for students. I look forward to supporting my students in their scientific or engineering research projects while working to find experts in their field of study to provide expertise and/or mentorship. Living and having our school in a coastal area provides my students with many opportunities to conduct field investigations on topics that genuinely matter to the world today. I hope to offer more of these real-world data and observation experiences for my students as they connect their local research to the global community. I want to gain more knowledge on competitions for my students to enter so they can share their knowledge, understanding, and excitement about their research.

Carter Johnson

Hilsman Middle School (Athens, GA)

Bio: Carter Johnson graduated from Auburn University in 2019 with a bachelor's in rehabilitation and disability studies. After graduating, she moved to Athens, GA, where she began her career in special education. Now teaching 6th grade earth science, Carter strives to create an environment where all students can grow in STEM. This past school year, Carter mentored 20 students who participated in the school's science fair. Ten of those students competed at the district level, and two moved on to compete at the regional level. She hopes to increase those numbers and get more students involved during her second year!

Quote: I am excited to expand my library of resources through this program and pass these resources on to my students so they see how vast the world of science truly is. Sometimes science can sound intimidating, but I want my students to know that it is nothing to fear. Science is embedded in every part of life!

Patricia Jolliff

Richardson PREP HI Middle School (San Bernardino, CA)

Bio: Patricia Jolliff is a passionate middle school science teacher in an urban school. As the newly-appointed site science fair coordinator, Patricia organized a site science fair held in October 2022, the first time on the site in nearly 20 years. Students were on fire, and after six teams won awards at the district level, two went on to win at the regional level and compete at the state level.

Quote: Scientific thinking = problem-solving! I am thrilled to be selected to be a part of the Science Advocate Program for a second year as I advocate for students as they explore their scientific questions as a part of research. With the support of the Society for Science, I will ignite the passion for scientific discovery of some while fanning the flames of interest in others with our research program at Richardson PREP HI.

Winnie Jones

Meridian Public School District (Meridian, MS)

Bio: Winnie Jones is entering her ninth year in education. She began her career as an eighth-grade science teacher until she transitioned to being the fourth- through eighth-grade science academic coach. She inspires me to one day be superintendent of a school district. She has one child, Brycen, who is the center of her world.

Quote: I am beyond excited to embark on this journey to challenge the minds of young scholars. To help them explore their interests and burst through their boundaries to showcase their talents.

Stephanie Jones

Central Gwinnett High School (Lawrenceville, GA)

Bio: Stephanie Jones is a vibrant 42-year-old African American woman with an insatiable passion for science, snacks, and spending time in nature. Since childhood, Stephanie has been captivated by the mysteries of the natural world, spending countless hours exploring forests, collecting specimens, and marveling at the intricacies of life. Her deep love for science led her to pursue a degree in biology, where she excelled in her studies and became known for her keen analytical mind. Stephanie's ultimate joy is when she can combine her scientific knowledge with her love for nature, often embarking on solo expeditions where she can observe the interplay between ecosystems and gather inspiration for her scientific endeavors. As a firm believer in the power of education, Stephanie dedicates her time to teaching science to public school students. With her infectious enthusiasm and creative teaching methods, she strives to make science accessible and engaging for her students. Stephanie's classroom becomes a hub of exploration and discovery, where she encourages her students to ask questions, conduct experiments, and think critically. She goes above and beyond the curriculum, organizing science workshops, field trips, and hands-on activities to spark curiosity and ignite a lifelong love for scientific inquiry. Stephanie's unwavering dedication to her students and ability to make complex scientific concepts relatable have earned her the admiration and respect of her colleagues and the young minds she nurtures.

Quote: Being selected as an Advocate provides me with a platform to amplify my passion for scientific exploration and inspire my students on a broader scale. By serving as an Advocate, I can share my knowledge, experiences, and enthusiasm with a wider audience, opening doors for my students to see the real-world applications of science and its endless possibilities. This opportunity will positively impact my students by igniting their curiosity, instilling confidence in their scientific abilities, and empowering them to pursue their passions in science. Science is not static, it's dynamic, and with the opportunity to collaborate with others, I will have the chance to serve in a greater capacity moving forward.

Andrea Jydstrup-McKinney

West Career and Technical Academy (Las Vegas, NV)

Bio: Andrea Jydstrup-McKinney is in her eleventh year as the biotechnology program leader at West Career and Technical Academy in Las Vegas, NV. Before becoming a teacher, she was a cancer researcher and now loves teaching independent research to the next generation. She thinks that independent study is one of the best experiences that a student can participate in, even if they don't plan to pursue science later in life. She is a Las Vegas native who enjoys spending free time with her five-year-old son and husband and traveling as much as possible.

Quote: I am so excited to be selected to continue as an Advocate! I have always been a big proponent of independent student research, but my reach in my school has been limited. My first year allowed me to grow our competition participation to the largest it's ever been, and I will continue to be able to help more students, especially our underrepresented students, participate in independent research projects.

Michele Karnbach

Woodbridge High School (Woodbridge, VA)

Bio: Michele Karnbach is a science teacher in Prince William County, VA. She has taught middle and high school and recently was the director of the Outdoor Lab for Arlington County Schools. Her focus in science is using outdoor education to teach concepts relating to the natural world.

Quote: I'm excited to allow students to pursue science interests outside of their curriculums. I want to enable them to find something they're genuinely passionate about. I'm thrilled to be able to offer a higher caliber of science at my school.

Jean Karst

John Jay Science and Engineering Academy (San Antonio, TX)

Bio: Jean Karst is the Campus Program Coordinator at SEA. Her job duties include attendance, discipline, and 504's for SEA. She is also in charge of setting up various STEM events for students to experience STEM in nontraditional settings. Students can expect to participate in STEM outreach, internships, field trips and guest speaker events. Her passion for STEM is evident in everything that she does.

Jeannine Lanphear

North Brunswick Township Public Schools (North Brunswick, NJ)

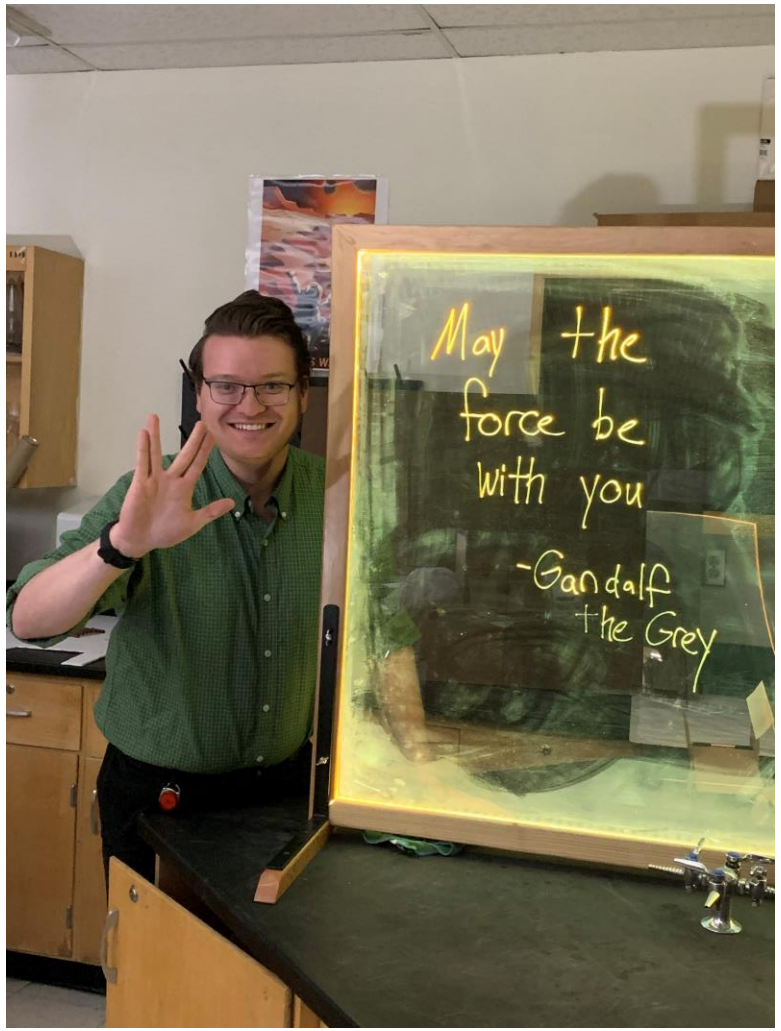
Bio: Jeannine Lanphear is the supervisor for grades five through eight math and science for the North Brunswick Township School District in New Jersey. In this role since 2014, she has been collaborating with staff to develop a student-centered, hands-on/minds-on middle-level STEM program centered on excellence and equity through innovative approaches such as contextualized learning, embedded STEM and coding opportunities, career readiness experiences, and flexible pathways to accelerated coursework to address STEM access for all learners. She holds bachelor's degrees in computer science and art history, a master's degree in educational technology, and certificates in leadership. She is a proud alumna of the NJEXCEL program at FEA and was recently selected to be the NJ STEM Month STEM Educator of the Year for 2021. This is her second year in the Society for Science Advocate Program.

Quote: I am deeply honored to have been selected to continue in year two as an advocate for students as a part of the Society for Science Advocate program. My passion has been assisting students in the critical middle years to develop their STEM identities to improve the pipeline and support students in accessing the incredible opportunities that a strong background in STEM provides in any future field of their choice. I am looking forward to this chance to support the participation of our North Brunswick students in high-quality science research and competition-based learning. Our students are amazing and are our future!

Lori Linkins

Neely's Bend Elementary School (Madison, TN)

Bio: Lori Likins has been working with students and teachers for over 20 years. She has worked as an EL teacher, a technology teacher, and dean of instruction. These work experiences have afforded Lori unique opportunities to offer teachers and students more hands-on, investigative adventures into science. She is excited about this new advocacy position as it will support her to move students into STEAM explorations and presentation opportunities.



Nathaniel Lohmann

Palmer High School (Colorado Springs, CO)

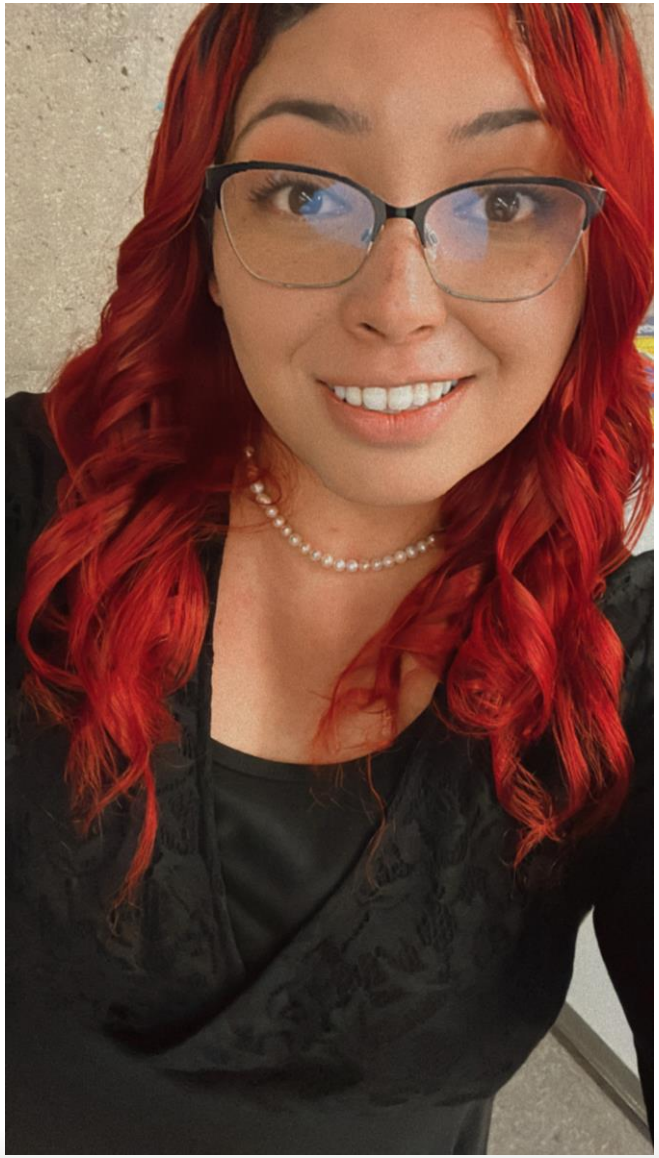
Bio: Nathaniel Lohmann is a science teacher from Colorado Springs. Inspired by the work of some of his students, spurred on by collaborations with other research teachers, and encouraged after attending the Science Research Teachers Conference, he has worked to develop a science research class (a first-of-its-kind program in Southern Colorado). This course will be offered for the first time during the 2023-2024 school year.

Ashley Long

Undercroft Montessori School (Tulsa, OK)

Bio: Ashley Long is a middle school science teacher who has taught science for seven years. She has three kids, a wonderful fiancé, and lots of pets. Ashley enjoys spending time with her family and pets and working in her garden. Ashley is a strong supporter of STEM education and has worked to create multiple STEM programs in schools. She is excited about the training!

Quote: I am very excited to learn new strategies to support my students and meet teachers from around the country! I can't wait to use my learning to support my students.



Jensine Lucas

Octavia E. Butler Magnet (Pasadena, CA)

Bio: Jensine Lucas is a youthful educator with vibrant interests in interdisciplinary instruction, building community, and advocating for bilingual pedagogical practices in the classroom. As a science teacher at Octavia E. Butler Magnet in Pasadena, Jensine demonstrates a passion for learning through multiple modalities and research as a way of life. In addition to inviting her students to be endlessly curious through a scientific lens, she has presented graduate research at the American Educational Research Association as a researcher. She holds a bachelor's degree in child adolescent development with a minor in music from California State University, Fullerton, and a master's degree in teaching from Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education and Psychology, where she is currently a graduate assistant. Jensine believes a nurturing classroom is a product of building meaningful relationships with students where each child feels empowered knowing how they think and learn best through routine metacognitive practices. As a lifelong learner and first-generation Latina, Jensine strives to teach students to persevere academically through engaging lessons and leading by example with her never-ending educational journey.

Quote: I'm euphoric about being selected as an advocate for the Society for Science! As a middle school teacher, I strive to lead by example by continuously growing my education. As a first-generation college student and a proud Guatemalan-American, I want my students to see their culture and background as assets to excel in life and Science. Through the advocacy program, I will gain strategic experience to continue guiding my students in scientific and life successes while celebrating and embracing what makes us unique!

Demvia Maslian

New Mexico Military Institute (Roswell, NM)

Bio: Demvia Maslian was born in the Philippines. She earned her bachelor's of secondary education in biology at Saint Louis University, Philippines. She continued her education at Henderson State University with a master's of science in education, majoring in advanced instructional studies. She has taught in three states (CA, AR, and NM). In 2017, she felt something was missing, so she pursued another master's degree. This time, it was on her subject of interest: science. She finished her master's of science in biology at the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology. She is pursuing her Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction with a specialization in technology at New Mexico State University. She received the Outstanding Biology Teacher Award 2022 for the State of New Mexico from the National Association of Biology Teachers. Additionally, she was recognized by the Province of Benguet as a 2022 Adivay Global Icon for Excellence in Educational Service. She is one of the sponsors of the STEM club at her school. Her students have won the Governor STEM Challenge in New Mexico four years in a row and the New Mexico State Science Fair overall champion two years in a row. She knows that women in STEM are underrepresented, so she hopes to inspire her students to pursue STEM majors in college and fill the gaps.

Quote: I would be thrilled to have the opportunity to inspire and support my students' interest in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. As an advocate, I could bring valuable resources and mentorship to my students, helping them develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills and encouraging them to pursue their passions in STEM, which can positively impact their future academic and career opportunities.

Kristi Mathiesen

Monte Vista Middle School (Monte Vista, CO)

Bio: Kristi-Lee Mathiesen, who started teaching in 2017, teaches sixth grade science and science research at Monte Vista Middle School in Monte Vista, CO. She graduated from Northern Arizona University with a bachelor's of science in education and CSU Global with a master's of science in teaching and learning, specializing in K-12 mathematics. Her passion is inspiring students to love learning, explore, and ask questions about the world around them.

Quote: Being selected for this year's Society for Science Advocate Program is an honor. By participating in the Advocate program, I aim to inspire more students in my district to find their love of science through guided and independent research projects. I am excited about this opportunity not only for myself but for my students as well.

Brittany Mendez

Harmony School of Innovation (Brownsville, TX)

Bio: Brittany Mendez is a passionate educator who strives to push her students to persevere further than they've ever imagined. She works to provide a variety of opportunities for her students to help them discover and develop their passions. From horticulture to underwater robotics, there is no challenge she doesn't shy away from. Brittany continues to be a guiding light for her students by wholeheartedly advocating for all things STEM.

Quote: I am ecstatic to be awarded this grant to continue guiding our students toward excellence. This support will allow us to focus on sharpening our student's skills and prepare them for the next level of research. I'm so excited to be guided by our future problem solvers. I could not be more thankful for this opportunity.

Donna Misthos

Austin Science Education Foundation (Austin, TX)

Bio: Donna Bourque Misthos is a retired high school science teacher in Austin, TX. For the past six (6) years, Donna has worked with the Austin Science Education Foundation as a student mentor for under-served middle and high school students. She has helped students complete science fair projects and prepare for science fair presentations at the Austin Regional Science Fair. Several of these mentored students have advanced to the Texas State Science Fair and many return year after year to compete in the regional science fair. Donna also coordinates and advises other mentors who help students prepare for the science fair.

Quote: I am excited to participate in the Expansion Advocate Program with the Society for Science to help more underrepresented students participate in science competitions in Austin, Texas. Students greatly benefit from entering their science and engineering projects in competitions outside of their campus because they get to talk to experts in the field of their project, and they get to see work by their peers, both of which can be inspirational and further their understanding of the topic. The feedback that students receive from experts and peers and asking questions can be a precious learning experience. Under-served students can benefit from entering their projects into research competitions. They may be exposed to experiences and conversations that inspire them to see STEM as a real path in life and a way to achieve their goals and dreams. Students participating in science competitions also see themselves as scientists and become science ambassadors by sharing their experiences with their community.

Jessica Mitchell

McNeil Middle School (Wichita Falls, TX)

Bio: Jessie has been a middle school science teacher for 15 years. She has combined with a retired science teacher to bring back their regional science fair that has been inactive for almost 20 years. Jessie is excited to return the science fair to the classroom and looking forward to making it a part of her curriculum.

Quote: It has been 20 years since students have competed in the science fair in my district. I am so excited to be selected for this opportunity to learn how to properly plan and conduct the fair. The future is going to be bright for the next generations of students.

Joy Mordica

Equity Research Group (Atlanta, GA)

Bio: Dr. Joy Mordica is the Chief Executive Officer of the Equity Research Group, where she directs all activities conducted by the organization. Her experience in education policy and data analytics provides a wealth of knowledge that she uses to advance equity issues across multiple facets of society. As the daughter of a military serviceman, Joy learned to embrace cultural and racial diversity early on as her family lived abroad during her formative years. Joy completed her undergraduate degree in education at Vanderbilt University and holds a doctoral degree in Educational Policy Studies from Georgia State University. Joy has conducted training events for schools and districts on equity issues and focused on enriching science experiences for underserved teenagers and elementary school-age children.

Quote: I am excited to participate as an Advocate for a second year because I can build upon the lessons learned from the previous year. I am excited to implement ideas to attract more students to participate in science competitions. As an informal educator, it is especially rewarding to witness students developing knowledge and skills through hands-on experiences related to their interests. As an Advocate, I can create a learn-by-doing environment conducive to developing science concepts individually.

Lalitha Murali

Glen Hills Middle School (Glendale, WI)

Bio: Lalitha Murali is a gifted and talented teacher at the Glendale School District. When she started as a teacher, she noticed only a handful of immigrant and minority children in the gifted programs. Lalitha believes that given the right resources and experiences, every child can reach their true potential. Through starting educational outreach programs and organizing workshops, she began reaching out to the underrepresented groups in her school, and today, she has a strong advanced level programming for all of her students, and more minority and immigrant children are participating. As the President of the Wisconsin Science Education Foundation, she organizes and conducts the Badger State Science and Engineering Fair annually for WI students. She aims to close the opportunity gap between the inner-city and suburban school districts and provide opportunities for inner-city students to participate in science fairs and other STEM programs.

Quote: As an Advocate, I worked with my students to design microgravity experiments this year. What an excellent opportunity for our middle school students to see something they worked on going to space! I can't wait to provide more opportunities like this again next year!

Pamela Nagafuji

University of Colorado – Denver (Denver, CO)

Bio: Pamela received her Bachelor's degree in Biochemistry at the University of California, San Diego, and her Ph.D. at Purdue University. She has taught Chemistry at a Title 1 high school in Denver and is currently at the University of Colorado, Denver.

Quote: I am super excited to be part of this program to help change the demographics of our local science fair, which does not reflect the population of students in our region. In the over five years I have been involved in the science fair, I have not seen students from two of our closest urban and larger school districts. Both have a high number of students on free or reduced lunch programs. I look forward to introducing, encouraging, and facilitating their participation in the science fair!

Bree Oatman

Lower Brule High School (Lower Brule, SD)

Bio: Bree Oatman, Ph.D. (she/her), is a science educator who teaches on the Lower Brule Indian Reservation in central South Dakota. Bree is a self-proclaimed science education/pedagogy nerd. She believes chemistry is physics in the flesh, water is life, and pineapple belongs on pizza. When she is t doing science things, she can be found playing with her kids, reading a book, cooking, camping, or kayaking.

Quote: There is something alchemical about students engaged in research and events that give them a platform for communicating their ideas. These experiences provide meaningful contexts for students to apply what they learn to topics or issues they care about. Winning an award is a fantastic confidence booster too.

Alfredo Olivas

INSIGHTS Science & Discovery Center (El Paso, TX)

Bio: Alfred is a proud husband and son, originally from the old West Texas town of El Paso. He joined the INSIGHTS Science and Discovery team in the fall of 2021. He has spent almost half his life living and working abroad as a facilitator of science learning, instructional coach, and educational consultant in Egypt, Venezuela, China, and Vietnam. After obtaining his Bachelors' and Master's degrees in Biology and Science Education, he worked with the Directorate of Environment (DOE) at Fort Bliss/White Sands Missile Range as a Research Field Biologist. His professional interests, for both students and colleagues, lie in facilitating personalized learning experiences around interdisciplinary contexts and leading intentional feedback and reflection sessions for continued growth and learning.

Quote: While we may pride ourselves in serving the community and our learners as teachers, facilitators, and educators, the biggest driving force in our career choice is the honorary and humble role of an advocate and champion for our students.

Vilma Orduna

Porter Early College High School (Brownsville, TX)

Bio: Vilma is a Physics teacher at Porter Early College High School in Brownsville, Texas. Vilma holds a B.S. in Physics and an M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction - Secondary Science from The University of Texas at Brownsville. Her 16 years as a Texas Educator include teaching experience at both middle and high school levels and adult continuing education.

Brenda Perez-Goodrum

New Liberty Innovation School (Salem, MA)

Bio: Brenda Perez-Goodrum, Ed.D, CAGS, M.Ed; B.S. is the only science facilitator and STEM Coordinator at New Liberty Innovation High School (NLIS) in Salem, MA. She teaches biomedical and biotechnology, biology, physics, Forensics, scientific investigations, and STEM. Brenda is recognized for excellence in Science teaching by the Read Trust Foundation. In addition, she has been awarded the Sontag Prize for five years in Teaching Life Science.

Quote: I am excited about being selected. Students will be provided opportunities and skills to see science as a way of life, allowing students to be part of change; to show them they can be active in the world and not just a passenger.

Damaris Ponciano-Jackson

M.E.T.A.S. STEM, LLC (Frederick, MD)

Bio: Damaris Ponciano-Jackson is a first-generation Guatemalan immigrant who has been teaching at different organizations and schools since 1992. She loves spending time with her children exploring, cooking, attending church, and traveling. Damaris gained research experience through organizations such as the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, the National Science Foundation, and the National Institutes of Health. Ms. Ponciano-Jackson is well-respected and has abundant experience teaching children, adolescents, and adults. She enjoys sharing her knowledge and strives to ensure her students pursue their interests through education.

Quote: I'm grateful that I was selected to participate in the Society for Science Advocate Program because it will allow students to experience the joy of presenting their research at different conferences and events.

Tyrikia Porter

Magnolia Middle School (Meridian, MS)

Bio: Ms. Porter is a 7th-grade Science teacher at Magnolia Middle School. She is a native of Louisiana and began her teaching career when she moved to Meridian, MS, in 2018. She is the proud mother of two daughters and grandmother of one granddaughter. She is passionate about advocating for and helping children recognize and reach their full potential. She believes and instills that no one should be a product of their environment. She encourages her children with the scripture: "You Can Do All Things Through Christ Who Strengthens You.“

Quote: I am so excited to be chosen as a 2nd year Advocate. Being a part of this program has provided me with the resources and connections to assist my students in their Science Fair quests. We made school history this year by having eight students advance to the State level, and 3 of those 8, placing 1st, 3rd, and 5th in their respective categories. I am looking forward to more accomplishments next year.

Garrick Purdie

Duplin Early College High School (Kenansville, NC)

Bio: Garrick Purdie is a science teacher at Duplin Early College High School. Before teaching, he was a chemist, working in pharmaceutical testing and forensics over his career. Mr. Purdie has a Bachelor's degree in Biology and a Master's degree in Forensic Chemistry and Teaching. When not teaching, Mr. Purdie assists with his wife's small business as a jewelry artisan and enjoys music, reading, and politics.

Quote: I could not be more excited to participate as an Advocate! My dream is to ignite a love for science in students and, most of all, let them know that it doesn't matter what they look like or where they are from; they can be scientists as much as anyone. This selection allows me to serve them better, and I am grateful for that.

Liliana Ramos

Ronald W. Reagan Doral Senior High School (Doral, FL)

Bio: Mrs. Liliana Ramos has been a science and math teacher for over a decade and has been known for incorporating engineering concepts into her lessons. She holds a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering and knows the importance of diversification in STEM careers. Mrs. Ramos collaborates with the College of Engineering and Computing at Florida International University to increase the number of female and Hispanic students participating in STEM disciplines. Every year during the spring, Mrs. Ramos encourages young talents to apply for the summer research opportunities offered at the local university, where students find their passion and network with potential mentors and employers.

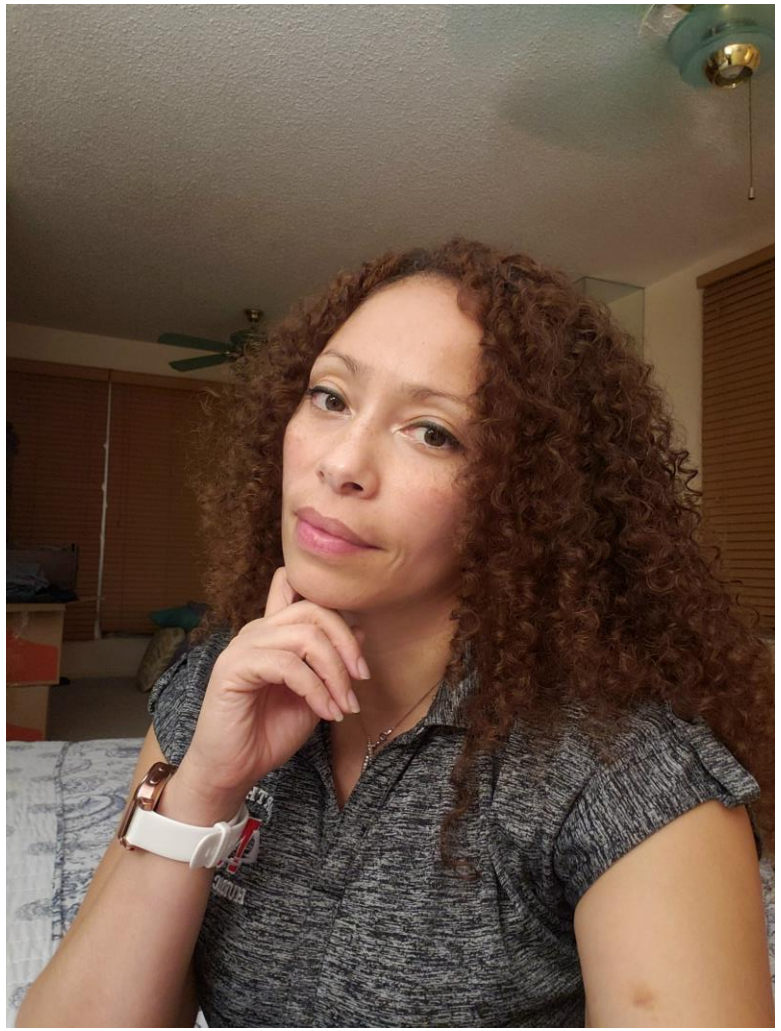
Quote: Do not work hard; work joyfully, and all your dream will become your reality, Mrs. Ramos. I am very excited about this opportunity because I will receive information about competitions and other science contests offered by different organizations. Additionally, by participating in this program, I will learn how to look for funding sources for my students' research projects. Another advantage of this training for me is being able to network with sponsors and get to know experienced advocates, which will be helpful for future endeavors and recruitment.

Laura Rosado

Colegio San Ignacio de Loyola (San Juan, PR)

Bio: Laura Rosado has a B.A. in Biology from the University of Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras and an M.Ed in Curriculum and Teaching-Environmental Sciences from the University of Turabo. She has been a science teacher for the past 20 years and has taught Life Science, Physical Science, Biology, AP Biology, and AP Environmental Science. Laura is also a Science Fair Coordinator and has offered scientific mentoring to dozens of students who have participated in different local, regional, and international science fairs. In 2013, she was recognized by the Humacao School District for being the teacher with the most students participating in the Science Fair. She describes herself as a lifelong learner.

Quote: Laura Rosado indicates that "education is her vocation and research, her passion ."She is very grateful to have been selected to participate in the Society for Science Advocate Program. "Participating in this program will give me more strategies to guide young scientists, underrepresented races/ethnicities, and low-income households in entering science research competitions. Laura indicates that through science and education, dreams can come true.



Wanda Rosario

Northeast High School (Oakland Park, FL)

Bio: Wanda Rosario is a Biology teacher, at Northeast High School. She is the sponsor of the Junior Academy of Science Club, in which she works along side passionate STEM students to participate in STEM competitions and projects. She has been a Biology teacher at Northeast High for 20 years and is teaching a STEM Research course this 2023-2024 school year.

Quote: Grateful to be a candidate of this impactful program that is providing a gateway for future innovative young minds. I strive to inspire students to find pathways to solve world problems and power economies. These students can be our future in finding new ideas to solve critical issues, from providing energy security to curing illnesses to living sustainably through their skills and knowledge acquired through STEM research.

John Ruhl

Toms River Intermediate North (Toms River, NJ)

Bio: John Ruhl is a 17-year teaching veteran. He coaches robotics and community college esports and runs NJTSA for his school. Lifelong Learning seeks to promote digital equity for students in Title 1 schools.

Quote: I'm excited to help promote digital equity and opportunities too often underserviced groups of students. Robotics, community college esports, and run NJTSA for his school. Lifelong Learning seeks to promote digital equity for students in Title I schools.

Alfred Santos

Harvest Preparatory Academy (Yuma, AZ)

Bio: Alfred Santos is a STEM Program Coordinator, Biology, and Research Teacher at Harvest Preparatory Academy in Yuma, Arizona. He works with diverse groups of students with their Science Research and guides them to different STEM competitions.

Quote: I am truly excited to be an Advocate for the second time around. Recruiting and guiding underserved and underrepresented students in STEM and Research has been my professional goal for the past 6 years of my teaching experience here in the United States. Seeing my students become successful and motivated is my greatest reward as a teacher.

Tabatha Schacht

Montwood High School (El Paso, TX)

Bio: Tabatha Schacht is an educator passionate about teaching and dedicated to biomedical science. As a Montwood High School teacher, she teaches Principles of Biomedical Science and Phlebotomy. In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Schacht also serves as the Biomedical Lead for her department, helping to develop the curriculum and guide the program's direction.

Quote: My students strive to learn more about science, and I am making it my mission to help them on their journey.

Jake Schofield

Yonkers Partners in Education (Yonkers, NY)

Bio: Jake joined Yonkers Partners in Education in 2017 to establish a new science research initiative, where he currently teaches over 60 highly motivated students who conduct original scientific research across three years. After graduating from Wesleyan University in 2012 as a Biology major, Jake spent several years teaching and cycling in India, Nepal, Vietnam, and Colombia. He then taught Biology and Math at the IB-accredited Colegio Suizo in Queretaro, Mexico. He returned to the States in 2016 to live in Yonkers, become a New York State certified teacher, and attend Columbia s Teachers College, where he earned an M.A. in Secondary Science Education.

Delois Scott

Murphey Middle School (Augusta, GA)

Bio: Delois Scott is a 7th-grade Life Science Teacher and teaches in Richmond County School System in Augusta, Georgia. She plans on taking on this new adventure as an advocate to add skills towards STEAM and science engineering to promote more hands-on activities in the classroom with labs through extended phenomenon investigations via competitions. Delois tells her students daily to be leaders, not followers, so they can all be successful in everything they do. She brings a passion for teaching the subjects, good communication, organization skills, beauty, creativity, critical thinking, patience, family support, compassion, individuality, and energy to her classroom!

Quote: I am excited because we are a very diverse school and considered the underdogs, and what s not expected don t have to be explained. To say anything can be achieved and done if you want it.

Zulaika Shamshieva

Tallahassee School of Math and Science (Tallahassee, FL)

Bio: Zulaika Shamshieva was born into a family of engineers in Uzbekistan. Having more than 11 years of experience, she has been a teacher in urban and suburban school districts. She is presently employed at a Title 1 STEM school located in Tallahassee, Florida.

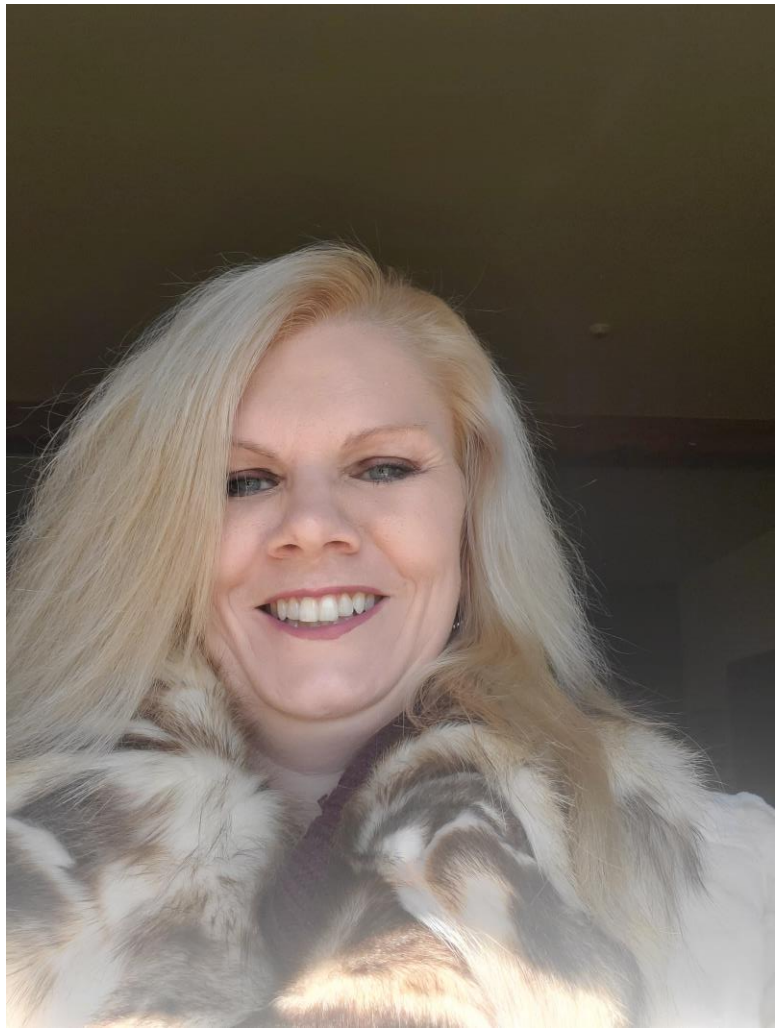
Quote: I am thrilled to have been selected as one of the STEM Advocates. This opportunity will allow me to bring new and innovative teaching approaches to my classroom. By incorporating these methods, my students will be better equipped to succeed and achieve their goals. Our consistent and small actions can significantly impact our students' lives as a teacher.

Adrienne Shilling

Idaho Virtual Academy (Meridian, ID)

Bio: Dr. Audrey Smeltzer-Schwab has taught chemistry and physics for 20 years in the Muhlenberg School District. She attained her Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction from Mercer University in 2018. She has two master's degrees, one in education and the other in science education, from Gratz College and Lebanon Valley College, respectively. She has been entering students in science competitions since 2004. However, since 2015 she has made it her goal to push students into science research.

Quote: I aspire to inspire my students while providing them with lifelong learning opportunities. I tell my students that being intelligent and working hard will take them everywhere. I am excited to be able to provide my economically disadvantaged students with opportunities they wouldn't have otherwise, whether it be equipment or going places through their science research.



Audrey Smeltzer-Schwab

Muhlenberg High School (Reading, PA)

Bio: Dr. Audrey Smeltzer-Schwab has taught chemistry and physics for 20 years in the Muhlenberg School District. She attained her Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction from Mercer University in 2018. She has two masters degrees; one in education and the other in science education, from Gratz College and Lebanon Valley College, respectively. She has been entering students in science competitions since 2004. However, since 2015 she has made it her goal to push students into science research.

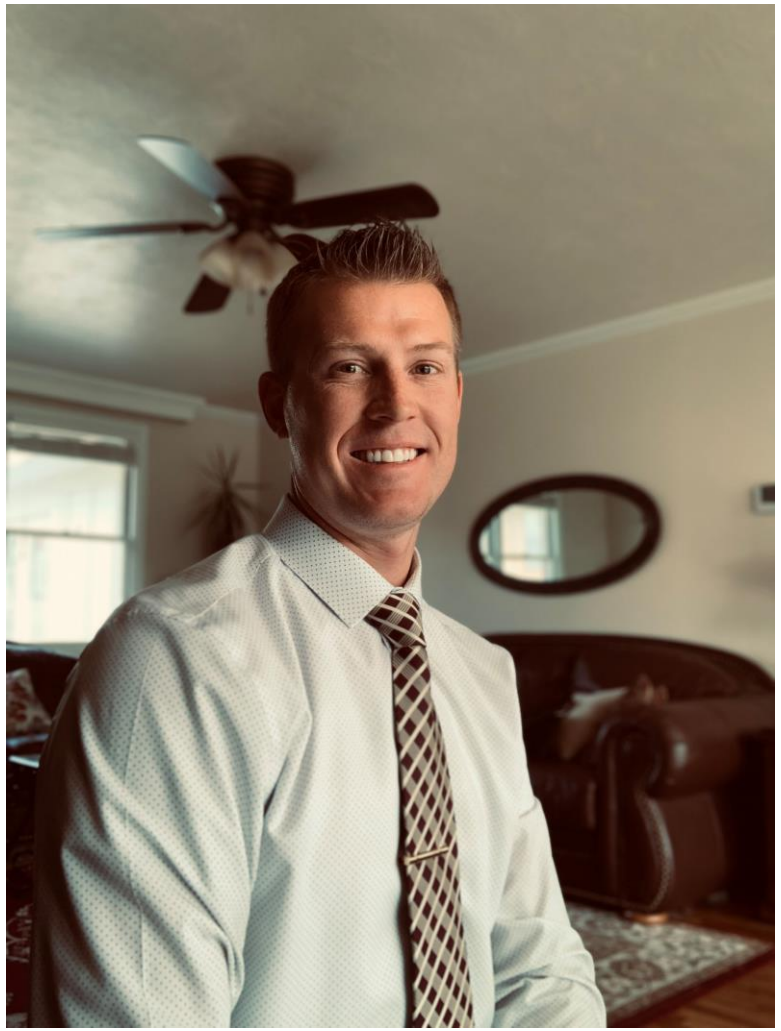
Quote: I aspire to inspire my students while providing them with lifelong learning opportunities. I tell my students that being smart and working hard will take them many places. I am excited to be able to provide my economically disadvantaged students with opportunities they wouldn't have otherwise; whether it be equipment or going places through their science research.

Katie Southard

Salem High School (Salem, AR)

Bio: Katie Southard is a middle and high school teacher at Salem High School in Salem, Arkansas. She is in her eighth year of teaching with a Bachelor's Degree in Secondary Education with a Biology emphasis. She has taught all science disciplines over those years, including 7th-grade Integrated Science, 8th-grade Integrated Science, 9th-grade Physical Science, 10th-grade Biology, AP Biology, Environmental Science, and Anatomy and Physiology. She started attending and having students compete in science fair competitions in 2021 and has since had students win at regional and state levels, as well as two ISEF qualifiers. Katie is furthering her education and will graduate in the Fall with a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership.

Quote: Being selected as a recipient of this grant gets me excited! I hope that my excitement gets my students excited as well.



Bradley Spencer

North Park Elementary School (Roy, UT)

Bio: Bradley found his passion for science as a student in the aerospace engineering program at Utah State University. Bradley currently teaches 6th grade in Utah. He believes the best way to learn science is by doing it. You will often find him modeling an experiment with his science class, launching bottle rockets, or exploring the wonders of the universe. Bradley truly enjoys teaching science and loves the amazing students he is able to work with every year.

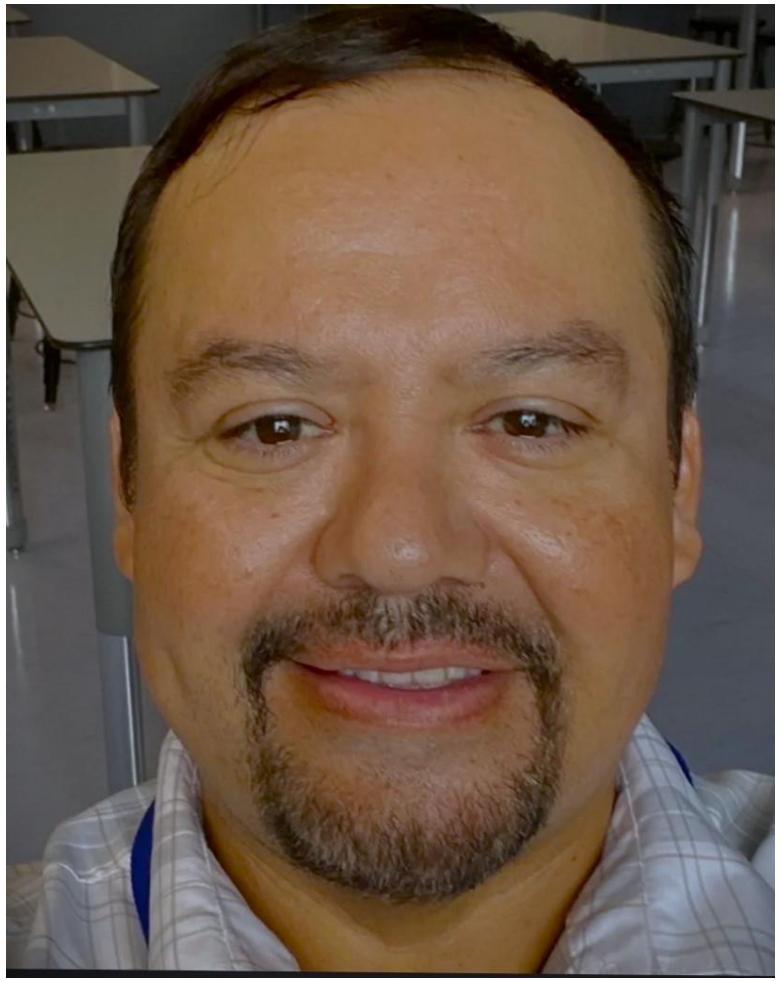
Quote: This advocate program is an amazing way to challenge students. Sometimes a person will never know how far they can go until they are given the opportunity. As an advocate in this program I look forward to helping students seize that opportunity.

Jennifer Stover

Lufkin High School (Lufkin, TX)

Bio: Jennifer Stover is a STEM and Advanced Placement Environmental Science teacher at Lufkin High School, Texas. She is passionate about encouraging students to grow in knowledge and confidence to develop solutions to our planet's ever-changing environment.

Quote: I am a high school educator passionate about teaching students to gain knowledge in STEM fields and develop the skills necessary to solve the ever-evolving problems we face as a society. I want my students to have the confidence to navigate the complexities of inventing solutions for a brighter future. Being selected for this program is an honor, and I am very excited to learn from professionals in the field about how I can expand my influence to more students and especially to those students that may not have the support they need to explore options in STEM fields.



Sergio Torres

Native American Community Academy (Albuquerque, NM)

Bio: Sergio is a passionate scientist, researcher, and educator serving underserved students in the land of enchantment, New Mexico. His science classes and labs engage students in learning about natural and physical work through research and inquiry-based learning. He sponsors the NACA STEAM Team and advocates for students to propose solutions for various projects, including water quality and indigenous medicinal plants.

Quote: New Mexico is a fantastic state with many areas to explore and engage students in thinking outside the box. The Society for Science provides excellent resources and gateways to have teachers work with underserved communities and minority students to increase diversity and creative perspectives in the next generations.