

# Vermont Science Education Sparks

The newsletter for Vermont Science and STEAM educators and supporters

**September 2023**

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## How to Access this Newsletter:

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Request subscription by emailing me at

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## Also check out:

The [AOE Weekly Field Memo](#)

The [AOE Science Website](#)

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## You are 1 month in...how's it going?

I would like to start off thanking each of you for your dedication and heart that you bring to your classroom(s) every day. John Dewey stated, "Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself." It cannot be stated strongly enough that the work that you do is vitally important in the growth of children, the stability of families, and the vibrancy of communities.

At the close of the last school year, I asked Vermont science educators to share their successes. Four educators submitted responses (anonymously) – I would like to take this space to celebrate those successes:

- *"I had students draft a district action climate plan and present it to the school board. I was an honoree for the Presidential Award for Innovation in Environmental Education."*
- *"I was able to teach students how to suture wounds in a course called 'Biology for the Medical Profession' during our unit on the integumentary system."*
- *"I had a student in one of my classes this semester with many learning challenges. He engaged with me, and I was able to give him a lot of individual support during class. He was able to do our last project completely independently."*
- *"I had a student help me create a hands-on assignment that took the place of an online simulation around fossils and relative dating. We created rock layers out of a flour mixture and then added 'fossil' shells."*

Thank you to the educators for sharing, and kudos to them for these accomplishments! This year I am going to encourage you to share your successes and let this professional learning community celebrate you. Do not underestimate the importance of the work you do. If you have something to share – a positive interaction with a student, a successful lesson or unit, or a groundbreaking moment – large or small, please submit it using this [form](#).

In addition to acknowledging you for the work that you do, this quarterly newsletter will also inform you of upcoming opportunities (e.g., PD or grant opportunities), inform you about what is happening at the State level in education, address topics in science education, highlight curriculum ideas, and take the occasional poll to inform the work that we do. I hope that you find it useful and informative.

I wish you an incredibly positive and productive year.

*Kathryn Rossman, AoE Science Specialist*



## Call for Nominations for The Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST)

The Presidential Awards for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching are the highest honors bestowed by the United States government specifically for K–12 science, technology, engineering, and/or mathematics teaching. Awardees serve as models for their colleagues, inspiration to their communities, and leaders in the improvement of STEM education. Since 1983, more than 5,200 teachers have been recognized for their contributions to STEM education. Up to 110 teachers are recognized each year.

### Presidential Awardees receive:

- A certificate signed by the President of the United States
- A trip to Washington, D.C. to attend a series of recognition events and professional development opportunities
- A \$10,000 award from the National Science Foundation
- Access to a network of award-winning teachers from across the country

### Who Can Nominate?

Anyone—principals, teachers, parents, students, or members of the general public—may nominate exceptional science, technology, engineering, and/or mathematics teachers. There is no limit to the number of nominations one may nominate. To nominate a teacher, please go to the [PAEMST](#) website.

**Nominations must be submitted by January 8th, 2024 for a teacher to be eligible for the 2023-2024 application cycle.** Teachers should be nominated as soon as possible to give them ample time to prepare an application.

To submit a nomination, provide the teacher's name, email address, and school name. All nominated teachers will receive an email inviting them to begin the application process. Teachers may also self-nominate by beginning the application process themselves on the [PAEMST](#) website.

### Who Can Apply?

This year the awards' cycle is focused on elementary school science, technology, engineering, and/or mathematics teachers (K–6). Secondary school teachers (7–12) will be eligible to apply during a future cycle.

### The Process:

Upon nomination (by self or other), candidate will begin the application process. This process is explained in the PAEMST Application Packet found on the "[About the Awards](#)" page on the PAEMST website. The VT PAEMST State Coordinator will be notified once you begin the application. Mentors are available to support applicants through the application process. All application materials must be completed and submitted in the [online application portal](#) by **February 6, 2024 at 11:59 PM Eastern Time.**

Our science educators do amazing work every day. Acknowledge and celebrate them by nominating them for this incredible, prestigious award!

To nominate or apply, visit [www.paemst.nsf.gov](http://www.paemst.nsf.gov)

The National Science Foundation administers PAEMST on behalf of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.



## STEAM Challenge Grant: Application is Open!

**STEAM Challenge Grant**: Request for Applications SY 2023-24 Opening Monday, September 18th!

The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) invites Supervisory Unions/Supervisory Districts (SU/SDs) to complement and/or amplify their existing secondary school curricula by providing students an innovative learning opportunity to use STEAM learning principles to solve a problem within their communities or the state. Successful applicants will demonstrate their ability to organize interdisciplinary teams of at least five secondary students and one licensed educator to identify a problem within the state, propose a process to understand the root causes of the problem, leverage the expertise of their education community, and create a sustainable solution using a STEAM approach.

This short-duration, competitive grant opportunity will make awards of up to \$15,000. The agency anticipates that most requests will be at \$10,000 or less. SU/SDs who were previously awarded a challenge grant are eligible to apply, however, SU/SDs that did not receive funding in the previous grant offering will be prioritized for award. The total amount of funding available for this grant opportunity is \$100,000.

**Application Due Date: October 16, 2023 (4:00 PM)**

**Anticipated Grant Duration: June 30, 2024**

Number of Awards: Number of awards will be determined by the number of applications received and available funding.

**Informational Meeting: October 2, 3-3:30 pm**; request meeting link from [lisa.helme@vermont.gov](mailto:lisa.helme@vermont.gov). This is an optional meeting for applicants to ask questions.

For additional information, contact: Lisa Bresler, Arts Specialist, at [lisa.bresler@vermont.gov](mailto:lisa.bresler@vermont.gov)

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## Vermont Public: But Why?

The team behind [Vermont Public's \*But Why\*](#) has created a series of short videos for 3rd-5th grades. In the first season, *Northeast Nature*, host [Jane Lindholm](#) helps kids explore the science behind what's happening in the northeastern U.S. each month, offering educators and students an opportunity to find science in their own backyards. Additionally, the team provides teacher resources, project suggestions, and fun activity guides to take learning off the screen and into the classroom. Additional FREE printed copies of workbooks are available to Gr.3-5 teachers. [Visit the website](#) to find out more and request your copies today.



**Again, thank you!**

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter. I hope you continue to stay tuned in to this quarterly posting. My goal is to use this as a medium to build community among science educators and supporters in Vermont. There is a tremendous wealth of knowledge in this state that deserves to be shared and celebrated!

If there is a topic that you would like to learn more about or something you are wanting support with (e.g., science content, classroom management, curriculum development, or in need of resources), please reach out and I will put it out to the science community.

And take the time to [share your successes](#) – you deserve it.

Have a wonderful Fall.

*Kathryn*

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