

**NASA
Student Involvement Program
(NSIP) and me**

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Two years ago, I was searching the Internet, looking for something that would excite and motivate my students. Little did I know, that what I found that day would change their lives and mine! I found NSIP, NASA's premiere opportunity for students (<http://www.nsip.net/>). Students in grades K-12 participate in and compete in a variety of competitions from *Planet Watch* to *Design a Mission to Mars*).

Every one of my one hundred and twenty students gets to participate annually and they receive recognition whether they place at a NASA center or not. Our first year, a team of students was selected as the national winner in one category, which meant an all expenses paid trip for them to Space Camp. Last year, a team won 3rd place in their region. In addition, our entire school was able to participate in daylong assemblies that brought NASA and space exploration to our facility! The quality of student products improved and reluctant learners became motivated, engaged and even raised grades in my class.

Honestly, NSIP changed my teaching and my expectations. An additional benefit was the doors NSIP has opened for me. First, at my district and state level, I have met other teachers who participate in NSIP and we are able to share ideas and strategies. It was at one of these meetings that I learned about NASA's opportunities for teachers.

For two weeks, all expenses paid, including airfare, hotel, meals and more, I enjoyed an intensive NASA workshop. Teachers were taught by Nobel Laureate professors at Cal Tech and real rocket scientists from JPL on different phases of planet and star exploration. We were able to see the construction of the Mars Rovers set for liftoff in 2004 and traveled to NASA's Goldstone Deep Space Network in the Mojave Desert to download information from the outer planets. We took another trip to the top of Mt. Wilson to look at sunspots the size of earth, using the same telescopes that

astronomers like Hale, Halley, and Nicholson used. Imagine sitting in the cockpit or talking to the test pilots at NASA's Dryden Center at Edwards Air Force Base, where aeronautical research of the future is being conducted! I did! JPL is NASA's leader in interplanetary science, paving the way for human exploration of our solar system and beyond.

I want to use what I learned at JPL to catch the interest of my students. Today's middle school students are tomorrow's scientists, engineers, and astronauts. As for this teacher, I may not travel to infinity and beyond, but my students will!

(Editor's note: NSIP entries are due in January.)



Here is a challenge to NMLSTA members across the US. Last year there was only one (if that) entry in the NSIP program from the following states:

Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Indiana, Louisiana, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Vermont, Washington DC, West Virginia, and Wyoming

If you can, take up the NSIP Challenge, and make our past-president, Anne Holbrook, work harder than ever to find judges for all the outstanding NMLSTA member projects. (Anne's job as an Einstein Fellow has been to develop this program with NASA...)

To those of you who live in the other 32 states – keep those projects flowing and make Anne's day!

In 2002-2003 the categories for Middle School students are:

*Aerospace Technology Engineering Challenge
Science & Technology Journalism
Watching Earth Change
Design a Mission to Mars*

If you teach Earth and Space Science, Life Science, Physical Science, General Science, or Science – you can work this competition into your lesson plans, and your students will thank you!

See the Congratulations section at the bottom of the next page for more NSIP news. Put *your name* in the Level Line next year – and open the world to your students.