

December 15, 2014 – Shelburne Teacher Recognized for Science

Contact: Brenda Lovekamp
School Board Clerk
540-332-3920

Shelburne Teacher Recognized for Science

Nicole Boles of Shelburne Middle School shared insights into student-centered, inquiry-based science teaching in a presentation at the annual Virginia Association of Science Teachers (VAST) Professional Development Institute in late November. The presentation was part of the Virginia Initiative for Science Teaching and Achievement (VISTA), a groundbreaking program that promotes problem-based science learning.

Funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, VISTA provides free professional development intended to shift science instruction from the traditional teacher-led classroom to active instruction that is more aligned with real-world, professional science practices. Boles is part of a cohort of teachers who were selected to participate in VISTA's program for early career secondary science teachers in the fall of 2013. They are now well into the last phase of the two-year program.

At the conference, teachers engaged conference attendees in an inquiry-based learning activity, sharing their lesson plans and showing samples of student work. "Presenting their unique lesson plans and sharing student work before colleagues is an invaluable aspect of VISTA," said Pat Linehan, principal investigator and chief operating officer of VISTA. "We're creating a community of practice and support for these new teachers. Part of that community-building is bringing teachers together to share the lessons they've created according to the VISTA method – interactive lessons that get students engaged and actively learning science in the classroom."

Ms. Boles commented, "My VISTA experience has been full of valuable resources. Experienced and friendly professors have provided me with many strategies to help me engage my students in inquiry and problem-based learning. This kind of exploration is exciting because it turns Life Science into 'Living Science'!" Participants in the VISTA secondary teacher program (STP) received two graduate-level courses designed specifically for early career science teachers, resulting in six graduate credits; \$1,000 stipend per year for two years; up to \$1,000 in classroom resources; a master science teacher/coach who assisted in ways such as co-teaching and planning for a total of 15 days over the two years; and a trip to the VAST conference.



Nicole Boles, science teacher
at Shelburne Middle School.