

The NSTA Learning Center

A Scalable e-Portal for Professional Development

The NSTA Learning Center is the national “home base” for science teachers in search of usable science content specifically tied to their individual professional development needs. Educators are able to diagnose their needs and gain access to a variety of PD resources and opportunities aligned to standards and grade bands they teach. Personalized tools within the learning center, such as *My PD Plan and Portfolio*, *My Library*, *My Calendar*, and *My Transcript*, will allow educators to manage, track, document, and certify their professional development growth over a period of time. The beta launch of the NSTA Learning Center and all the products below are available at <http://learningcenter.nsta.org>.

NSTA SciPacks are 5–10 hour online learning experiences to assist educators in understanding the science content they teach. SciPacks are based on the national science standards and accessible anytime, anywhere. All SciPacks contain a set of three to five Science Objects, each with embedded simulations and related questions. Each SciPack also contains a pedagogical section that provides the teaching context of the content, as well as individualized email support from a content wizard. All SciPacks conclude with a graded assessment that if passed, allows a teacher to print a “certificate” demonstrating mastery understanding of the content addressed within the SciPack.

NSTA Science Objects are free one- to two-hour learning experiences to enhance teachers’ understanding of a particular idea, based on the science literacy goals in the national standards. Each Science Object provides an understanding of the science content by providing a structured set of learning experiences through simulations and embedded assessments. Science Objects challenge teachers to explore and explain real-world phenomena. Science Objects are founded on the principle that learners must be challenged with a problem, observation, data, etc., in order to develop scientific understanding.

NSTA SciGuides are online thematically based packages of pre-evaluated and standards-aligned web accessible resources for science teachers to use in their classroom. Each SciGuide consists of a library of roughly 100 vetted web pages. Each SciGuide provides a brief content background description for the educator and links to the web-based resources. Each SciGuide assist educators in implementing the web-based resources with customized lesson plans, media vignettes, and samples of student work.

NSTA Symposia are face-to-face workshops that provide online follow-up learning opportunities, such as live web seminars and asynchronous listserv discussions. The content of Symposia is delivered in partnership with NASA, NSF, NOAA, FDA, and NSTA Press authors in STEM-related content areas.

NSTA Web Seminars are live professional development experiences that allow participants to interact with nationally acclaimed experts, scientists, engineers, and education specialists from NSTA partners such as NASA, NOAA, NSF, FDA, and NSDL—all from the convenience of a desktop computer! Educators use their browser to mark up and annotate presenter’s slides or share desktop applications in addition to engaging in chat with others and answering poll questions. Seminars are archived and available for viewing after the live event. Agency sponsored web seminars are free.

NSTA Online Short Courses are in-depth five-week e-professional development opportunities presented by science experts and NSTA staff, designed for teachers looking to learn a new topic or for those interested in a refresher course. Participants meet online with a content expert and NSTA staff for questions and discussions during live web sessions. Educators work also offline with self-paced materials to boost their knowledge of the topic: NSTA SciPacks, NSTA SciGuides, NSTA Press Books, and NSTA Journal Articles.