

# Sci-Link/Globe-Net

BY NANCY BRAY

**H**unting for salamanders in the woods, monitoring ozone levels, making leaf print shirts in an eastern Carolina wetland, and becoming friends with the teachers throughout the state—these are just a few of the memorable experiences I have had while attending a teacher institute called Sci-Link/Globe-Net over the last five years. Offered during the summer as well as during the school year, the program aims to link teachers with scientists doing cutting-edge research on environmental issues centered on global change and to encourage those teachers to develop activities that will present these new ideas to their students in the context of disciplines they are teaching. One scientist is linked with 30 teachers, who can link with perhaps a hundred or more students each.

I was first attracted to this program because it focuses on environmental issues. Through institutes, workshops, and teacher days, I learned about the latest research

from the best researchers in North Carolina. The institutes, workshops, and teacher days are all based on the same format: Teachers listen to research scientists present topics, and then brainstorm ideas on how the topic fits into their existing curriculum and how it can be introduced in the classroom in the form of a student activity. The main difference is in the length of the program; institutes are two weeks long, workshops are one week long, and teacher days are only one day long.

Speakers enhanced our notes with handouts containing tons of reference materials, including booklets, posters, and other materials available from federal and state environmental and agricultural agencies. In addition, after each program I received a book filled with the activities that all of the participating teachers had developed during the workshop. What a wealth of information! All of this is a great benefit to me, my students, and my school. At sci-

ence fair time, my Sci-Link/Globe-Net library becomes a resource for students looking for interesting projects. This abundant scientific information is invaluable and the numerous activities are exciting to do. But for me the value of the program goes much deeper than that.

Through the leadership of Dr. Harriet Stubbs, Sci-Link/Globe-Net has become a one-of-a-kind program to support and encourage teacher leaders. At my first institute, I was asked to lead a small group brainstorming session. No problem. A year later at my first teacher day I was asked to do the same thing, but this time I had to report the group's ideas to the entire assemblage—over 100 people. This was a little tougher. Later on, I was asked to be part of a Sci-Link/Globe-Net presentation at our state science teacher confer-

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ence. These presentations usually begin with a scientist discussing an environmental issue for about 30 minutes, and then four to six teachers offer suggestions for related activities to be used in the classroom. After that I was sent to one of the NSTA regional conventions for a similar session. Two years ago, Dr. Stubbs asked me to attend a training workshop for air and waste management in Pittsburgh. One of the requirements was that I put together two workshops in my own state, which I did. In her very quiet way, Dr. Stubbs has encouraged me to venture out of my comfort zone. Because of this, I am more confident and therefore more comfortable in trying new and different approaches in my teaching. Through her gentle nudges, teachers throughout North Carolina—as well as many teachers from across the country and the world—have had similar experiences.

Attracted by the high quality of the programs, many teachers have participated in more than one Sci-Link/Globe-Net event. Consequently, we have become friends and have formed a unique support network. Here, we are always treated like professionals. We know that we are with people who will nourish our desire to perfect our craft. Throw out an idea to a group of Sci-Link teachers and within a very loud hour you will have an exciting, polished activity ready to challenge any science class. We look forward to these lively conversations centered on challenging issues. When we return to our schools from these events, we do so with renewed enthusiasm for our profession.

To find out more about the Sci-Link/Globe-Net program and future institutes, workshops, and teacher days, visit their web site at <http://www2.ncsu.edu/ncsu/cep/scilink>. Also, be sure to check out the web

site put together by a group of teachers from Finland who attended last summer's Grandfather Mountain workshop. This site is located at <http://www.kauhajoki.fi/~kanuutti>.



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