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**Week of September 6, 2010**  
*revised*

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### How Good is One Teacher Compared with Another?

*New York Times* reporter Sam Dillon asks this question in his September 1 article on the use of value added modeling. “Use of value-added modeling is exploding nationwide,” writes Dillon. “Hundreds of school systems, including those in Chicago, New York and Washington, are already using it to measure the performance of schools or teachers. Many more are expected to join them, partly because the Obama administration has prodded states and districts to develop more effective teacher-evaluation systems than traditional classroom observation by administrators.”

- [Read the \*New York Times\* article](#)

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### NSTA's Conference on Science Education, Baltimore

Join thousands of educators in [Baltimore, Maryland, Nov. 11–13](#), to build your skills, expand your content knowledge and become inspired by leading experts in science education, including Bill Nye the Science Guy®. Whether you are a first-year teacher, veteran teacher, or administrator, hundreds of sessions and workshops, [field trips](#), [short courses](#), and [special programs](#) will prove to be relevant and



informative. Don't miss this opportunity to walk away with ready-to-use inquiry techniques, new teaching strategies, hands-on activities and lesson plans, exhibitor giveaways, and new contacts for your network. Use the [online session browser](#) to plan your agenda today. Save the most when you [register by September 24!](#)

K–16 Highlights:

- **Bringing Literacy and Science Together (B.L.A.S.T.) for Grades 2–4: Linking Home and School** ( Elem)
- **Hot Warm-Ups**—Capture your students' attention in the first few minutes of class using music, visuals, and games that focus their attention, review concepts, and challenge their thinking. CD included. (Elem–Middle)
- **Using Real-World Science Investigations to Enhance Existing Science Curricula**—Integrate an innovative science research class into your school curriculum. (Middle–High School/Supervisor)
- **Forensic Spectroscopy**—Use handheld digital spectrometer to analyze visible emission and absorbance spectra to identify evidence collected at a crime scene. (High–College)
- **Hands-On Performance Assessment for K–12 Students: The Impetus for Inquiry in Our Classrooms** (Supervisor)
- **Physical Science on a Shoestring**—Hands-on activities/demonstrations using on low-cost materials. (Elem–Middle)
- **Implementing Open Inquiry: Ideas for Engaging Students** (Elem–High)
- **Creating K–6 Classrooms That Embrace Science Inquiry: Helping Students Think and Work Like Scientists** (Elem–Middle)

Earn graduate credit for 12 hours of program attendance from [Framingham State University](#). Don't forget to visit the exhibit hall to stock up on freebies, and visit the NSTA Avenue (Booth No. 519) to learn about member benefits, products and services all designed with you in mind. Visit [www.nsta.org/baltimore](http://www.nsta.org/baltimore) for details or to register.

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### **Dept. of Education Announces Major Awards for New ELA and Math Assessments Based on Common Core Standards**

On September 2, the U.S. Department of Education announced more than \$330 million in grant awards will go to two groups to develop a new generation of math and English language arts assessments that will be aligned to the common core standards in these subjects currently adopted by 36 states.

Funding will go to the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), in the amounts of approximately \$170 million and \$160 million, respectively.

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) is a coalition of 26 states that includes: Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Colorado, the District of Columbia, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Maryland, Mississippi, North Dakota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Tennessee. The PARCC coalition will test students' ability to read complex text, complete research projects, excel at classroom speaking and listening assignments, and work with digital media, and will replace the one end-of-year high stakes accountability test with a series



of assessments administered throughout the year.

The SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium is a coalition of 31 states including: Alabama, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Iowa, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Nevada, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin, and West Virginia. The SMARTER coalition will test students using computer adaptive technology that will ask students tailored questions based on their previous answers. SMARTER will continue to use one test at the end of the year for accountability purposes, but will create a series of interim tests used to inform students, parents, and teachers about whether students are on track.

For more information, visit the [Department of Education website](#).

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### **From the NSTA Calendar: Space Exploration Art Competition**

As part of the International Academy of Astronautics Humans in Space Symposium, students ages 10–17 can express their ideas about the future of human space exploration through visual, literary, musical, or digital art. The competition judges will look at creativity, skill, and demonstration of meaning relevant to expressing “What is the future of human space exploration, and why is it important?” They’ll award bonus points for artwork that does not break obvious scientific principles.

Winning art will be displayed in an online gallery, and winners will be invited to attend the symposium in person in April 2011. [Click here](#) to learn more about how your students can enter the competition. The deadline is **October 13**.

Visit the [NSTA online calendar](#) for more ways to get your students engaged in science.

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### **Visit Kansas City and Build Your PD Portfolio—Earlybird Deadline: 9/17**

Science teachers planning for professional development should consider the first of NSTA’s fall conferences on science education to be held in [Kansas City, Missouri, Oct. 28–30](#). For all disciplines and every grade bands, PreK–16, including preservice teachers, this event provides performance-enhancing teaching skills and strategies. Workshops and seminars, presentations, and short courses offer wide topical and issue studies along with hands-on activities to use in the classroom. Check out some of more than 400 sessions scheduled:

- **Tackling the Global Warming Challenge in a Rapidly Changing World** ( Middle–High School)
- **Wind Energy Science for the Classroom**—Hands-on, standards-based lessons bring wind energy science into the classroom. (Informal Education)
- **Process-oriented Guided Inquiry Learning (POGIL) in High School Chemistry and Biology Classrooms** (ticketed short course)
- **Strategies for Teaching and Assessing the Nature of Science** (ticketed short course)
- **Featured Presenter**—Jeff Goldstein (Director, National Center for Earth and Space Science Education: **Science Education: Conceptual Understanding at an Emotional Level**)
- **Free Science Matters Community Event** with Bill Nye, the Science Guy, and hands-on activities for the family.
- **Engineering Modeling**—Using scale models of airplanes, students learn the applications of

scaling using ratios and proportions. (Elem–High)

- **Science + Writing + Learning**—Learn to implement science notebooks in your classrooms with math integration, supporting data, and assessments. (Elem–Middle)
- **STEM in Action: The Bridge to the Real World**—Instructional technology helps engage students in the learning process by providing authentic science experiences through design projects, competitions, and live-data analysis. (Elem–High)
- **Shawnee Mission West Public Schools ' Biotechnology, Wind and Solar Energy, Robotics, and Fine Arts in the Science Department** (ticketed field trip)
- **Exhibit Hall**—View and test new products and services for cutting edge science education from top companies across the nation.
- **Networking with your peers and the experts**—Hang out with those who have a passion for science education, make new friends and contacts.
- **Science Bookstore**—It's more than you imagined. Gifts, T-shirts, I Love Science mugs and the finest collection of science education books published. Check out our new titles!

For more information, visit [www.nsta.org/kansascity](http://www.nsta.org/kansascity). To save the most, register by **Sept. 17**.

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### ExploraVision Competition for K–12 Students Opens Registration

September 15 marks the kickoff of the Toshiba/NSTA ExploraVision Competition, celebrating its 19th year. Designed for K–12 students of all interest, skill and ability levels, ExploraVision encourages its participants to create and explore a vision of future technology by developing new ways to apply current science. Teachers who want to learn more about the program are invited to participate in a free web seminar. Register at [NSTA's Learning Center](#) to learn the details and have all of your questions answered. “*What is ExploraVision and How Can I Use It?*” is scheduled for Wednesday, September 15, at 6:30 pm ET. To view the application and read about past winning teams, go to [www.exploravision.org](http://www.exploravision.org). For more information, contact us at 1-800-EXPLOR9 or e-mail us at [exploravision@nsta.org](mailto:exploravision@nsta.org).

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### MSU Announces Online Science Courses for Fall

A series of Montana State University online graduate courses for science teachers will cover topics, including space flight, physics, nutrition, and microbiology.

The courses are delivered through NTEN, the National Teachers Enhancement Network, which has offered MSU courses fully online since 1993. Some of the fall 2010 courses are designed specifically for elementary teachers, including Using Local Ecosystems to Implement Elementary Biology Activities (BIOL 580) and K-14 Earth System Science (ERTH 580), both of which offer one and two graduate credits respectively.

Other fall courses include Nutrition for Fitness and Performance (HDFN 526), Special Relativity (PHSX 405), Astronomy for Teachers (PHSX 511), and more.

Also, a graduate course focused on spaceflight and space technology taught by the award-winning author and historian, Andrew Chaikin is offered. His books include the best-selling chronicle of the Apollo moon missions, *A Man on the Moon*, the main basis for Tom Hanks's Emmy-winning HBO miniseries *From the Earth to the Moon*. The course, entitled History of Spaceflight and Space Technology, is offered for 3 graduate credits in science education.

Courses begin in early to late September and offer a discount to members of the National Science Teachers Association.

Visit [Extended University](#) to see all the NTEN Fall 2010 courses, or call (800) 282-6062 for more information.

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