

Science from Scientists at Forest Lake Elementary



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Article appeared at: https://www.hometownsource.com/forest_lake_times/science-from-scientists-at-forest-lake-elementary/article_5d31682c-f765-11e7-9ded-3foaf998dfc6.html



Walk into Room 120 at Forest Lake Elementary on a Wednesday, and you will see science in action! This year, all fourth- and fifth-graders at Forest Lake Elementary are experiencing 18 hands-on science lessons, taught by trained scientists with advanced science, technology, engineering, and math degrees, who have been selected to work with the Science from Scientists program.

In the spring of 2017, a team of teachers and I met with Karlene French, director of Minnesota development with SfS, about the opportunity to bring this program to our school. After a short presentation and discussion, we knew this was an opportunity we couldn't pass up. Prior to the 2017-2018 school year, our team at Forest Lake Elementary met with

Renee Piersa, director of Minnesota operations with SfS, to select the hands-on lab-based lessons that would align with, support, and enrich our grade levels' current science curriculum. Some of the labs we selected include Engineering Redesign, Introduction to Electricity, Electromagnetism, Heart Health, Fossils, Simple Machines, Introduction to Tectonics, Photosynthesis, and Population and Sustainability. Our teachers have appreciated the support and enrichment that these labs have provided to their classroom science instruction. Now that we are halfway through our first year with the program, we are very happy that we made the decision to be part of it and hope to see the positive impact that this extra exposure to science will have on our students.

As their website states, Science from Scientists was founded by Dr. Erika Ebbel Angle in Boston, Massachusetts, in 2002. SfS's mission is to teach and inspire the next generation to identify and solve real-world problems by improving STEM literacy. Its vision is to inspire students, ignite interest, and improve STEM competency with the goal of filling the workforce pipeline with talented, competent individuals. SfS has only been in Minnesota since 2016, but this program provides STEM programming to 10,000 students a year across Minnesota, Massachusetts, California and Florida.

As Forest Lake Elementary serves fourth- through sixth-grade students, we are a good fit to be selected to participate in the SfS program as it focuses on upper-elementary and middle-school-aged students. SfS focuses on students within this age group to try to get them connected and interested in taking science-related courses prior to any social pressures taking effect, which can make excelling in science a challenge and negatively impact the number of students interested in STEM-related career options. Another benefit of participating in the SfS program is having our students interact with STEM professionals, as the instructors come from different backgrounds/ science related careers, who have exposed our students to exciting career opportunities in STEM. The work of SfS is data-driven, which is why grades four and five were selected to participate. Our fifth-graders take the Minnesota Science MCA, which is the assessment we collect data points on to measure the impact of implementing the SfS program. It is our hope to be able to expand this program into our sixth-grade classrooms in the future, as we are confident this is having a positive impact on our students' success in science!

We are very thankful to current funders of SfS who have helped make this program a reality at Forest Lake Elementary, which is free for the first two years of implementation. If you would like to learn more about the SfS program, including career opportunities, volunteer opportunities, and teacher/family resources, or if your business/corporation/foundation is interested in helping fund this amazing program, you can visit its website at www.sciencefromscientists.org. We are very happy that we made the decision to be part of it and hope to see the positive impact that this extra exposure to science will have on our students.

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