

News Center

NMSU workshop allows teachers to learn about rocketry



Area teachers build rockets as they participate in sessions addressing rocketry and microgravity during New Mexico State University's Summer of Innovation Teacher Professional Development Workshop in June and July. (NMSU photo by Margaret Kovar)

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Writer: [Margaret Kovar](#), 575-646-3082, request@nmsu.edu

Ever heard the saying "it's not rocket science?" Now area teachers can say they know the true meaning of this phrase after participating in New Mexico State University's Summer of Innovation Teacher Professional Development Workshop.

NMSU partnered with the New Mexico Space Grant Consortium for the workshop held in June and July. The event was made possible by the Launch to Learn NASA Grant, which only four universities in the nation received.

"Teachers are able to network and gain different perspectives. We come together to try to reach students and get them interested in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields," said Brian Claar, a science teacher at Camino Real Middle School. "It gives us a good way to get ideas to share with our kids and get them involved."

More than 130 teachers participated in workshops addressing microgravity, including the science behind it and how it affects objects. The sessions prepared teachers to run their own summer camps. In each camp, fifth-through eighth-grade students work on a four-week curriculum to develop an experiment for a sounding rocket.

"This is the launching of a lot of ideas. I think the rocketry, the actual dynamics of it, is really going to go over well with my students," said Rey Lujan Gaytán, a teacher with Cimarron Municipal Schools.

Sounding rockets are an inexpensive way to study microgravity, and each experiment created for the rockets will only last about five minutes. The students will be able to send their experiments into space at Spaceport America, the only site in the nation allowing them this opportunity. Twenty experiments will be selected for the launch in 2011.

"This is such an awesome opportunity, we are hoping that many teachers will try to develop an experiment to

launch next spring,” said Laura Tomlinson, SNM SEMAA assistant project director.

For more information, contact Susan Brown, director of STEM Outreach for the Institute for Excellence in Math and Science Education, at 575-646-7302 or Judy McShannon, of the New Mexico Space Grant Consortium, at 575-646-6414.

Broadcast Advisory: Watch this video on YouTube at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3eYFwbNAXM>. Video and sound bites for broadcast are available under the title Summer of Innovation at the following ftp site: <ftp://aggievision.goaggies@aggievision.nmsu.edu>. Use the following information if you are using a download client: Host: aggievision.nmsu.edu Username: aggievision Password: goaggies. To download these files you must have Quicktime Pro software. For questions on problems with down loading, contact Minerva Baumann 575-646-7566.

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