Research poster: Climate change science for northern Nevada educators

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Introduction

The EPSCoR Climate Change Education Component is a professional development program designed to facilitate Nevada middle school educators in implementing climate change science content and processes into their classrooms. A two-week summer institute provided the framework for the EPSCoR program. One institute was held in Las Vegas for Clark County School District teachers, and the second institute was held on the University of Nevada, Reno campus for Washoe County teachers. Institute focus comes directly from the original grant proposal. The essential question which directed the Summer 2009 Institute was:

How will climate change affect water resources and linked ecosystem resources and human systems?

Standards, SE & Inquiry

Three of the six participants teach in middle schools, the other three are elementary teachers. Standards were addressed according to which subjects the participants teach. The Nevada State Science Education Standards and National Science Education Standards (NSES) were studied and discussed in order to find Climate Change themes. Content Standards were then used to design original lesson plans aligned with Washoe County School District (WCSD) guidelines.

Lesson Plans & Assessments

Participants kept science journals of their experiences, reflected daily on the content provided, took part in climate change learning activities and lectures, examined the Nevada State and National Science Education Standards, and designed and presented a lesson on climate change intended for implementation during the school year. In order to help inform their teaching, participants were required to submit a Teaching as Research Project in which they analyzed data collected during their Fall lesson implementation.

The look ahead...

The second group of Nevada educators have already begun their Spring 2010 online course ENV 794 through the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, instructed by Dr. David Hassenzahl. This course will prepare participants for learning experiences this summer. Participants will complete the course in May, earning graduate credit from UNLV. UNLV and UNR Summer 2010 Institutes will be conducted July 26-30th and August 2-6th. Once these teachers have implemented Climate Change lessons in the Fall they will receive graduate credits from UNR. The use of researchers as climate change instructors made a large impact on 2009 participants. Soon, the Education Component will again be looking to fill this role with local and regional researchers of climate change.

The 2010 Essential Question to guide Summer Institute experiences is:

How will climate change affect disturbance regimes and linked systems?