The American Chemical Society’s Advancing Chemistry Teaching (ACT) program is designed to address the challenges facing today’s educators who hope to inspire an increasing number of students to pursue careers in the sciences.

The Science Coaches Program is one of many outreach programs that support teachers through ACT. Science coaches are chemists who partner with an elementary, middle or high school science teacher for at least one year to

Continued on Page 2
maximize learning for students. Schools participating in the program receive a $500 grant that can be used to purchase supplies or provide experiences for students. This year, ACS was proud to support 120 coach-teacher partnerships.

An Outstanding Partnership

One of these remarkable pairings is comprised of Dr. John Frost and Dr. Jenn Nass-Fukai, now in their second year in the program.

“I’m so grateful to ACS for allowing us to be part of the program,” says Jenn, the science coordinator at Overland High School in Aurora, Colo. “It’s an amazing opportunity for students to get a perspective from someone who’s more connected to the science industry than most teachers are and to see what it’s really like in the world of science.”

Science coaches assist one teacher at least six times a year in any activity the team agrees would be useful. John, a chemist at Thermo Fisher Scientific, spends many hours at the high school each week.

“Just seeing a professional scientist moving through the building sparks curiosity,” John says. At Overland, John can be found setting up experiments, repairing equipment or working with students in his office, dubbed “The Frost Cave.”

ACS Science Coaches Program

Continued from Page 1

ACS science coach Dr. John Frost and a high school sophomore test the mechanical stability of their experimental platform before loading it onto NASA’s zero gravity aircraft at Johnson Space Center. The students conducted a low-pressure distillation and the first Nuclear Magnetic Resonance experiment ever conducted in a moving aircraft.
Together, John and Jenn sponsor an after-school science club. In the past year, students have built a hydroponics lab, designed water filtration prototypes and participated in NASA’s High School Students United with NASA to Create Hardware (HUNCH) program. As a part of HUNCH, the students took an original experiment to a NASA facility to be considered for use on the International Space Station. Next year, these projects and others will become part of a class based on a graduate research model that students can take for credit.

**Program Benefits Students and Science**

John and Jenn agree that there are many immediate and long-term benefits of the Science Coaches Program for students, teachers and the science community.

“Being a science coach enables a chemist to have a sustained relationship with a school,” John says. “You can influence a lot of students and generate excitement and appreciation for science. Who knows what effects that may have down the road?”

Teachers are often limited by time, resources or expertise. A professional coach can provide invaluable knowledge, materials and assistance to make science more authentic and meaningful in the classroom.

“Anything that can be done to support the program will be paid back in multiples,” John says. “We [scientists] will eventually retire, and we’ll need new people with skills and a passion for science to fill the ranks.”

“We know the United States is behind many other countries in the STEM areas,” Jenn says. “What we’ve done in the past isn’t working. The ACS Science Coaches Program is something new and inspires kids to care about science. It’s the kind of innovative thinking we need to catch up to other nations.”

For more information about how you can make a gift to support the future of the Science Coaches Program or ACT, please contact Mary Bet Dobson at (202) 872-6210 or m_dobson@acs.org.

*‘The ACS Science Coaches Program is something new and inspires kids to care about science. It’s the kind of innovative thinking we need to catch up to other nations.’*

– Dr. Jenn Nass-Fukai
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