



ISAAC STEWART

A high school biology teacher discovers that his enthusiasm for science is contagious

When Isaac Stewart began teaching biology at Fisher High School, a small rural school in Illinois, the first-year teacher quickly realized he was the entire biology department. "I definitely had to pull my weight," he says. "There was no curriculum, and I had to build the program from scratch."

As a KSTF Fellow, Stewart brings the spirit of inquiry he learned through the Teaching Fellowship into his classroom. "I consistently reflect on what goes poorly and what goes well, then use my KSTF training to determine next steps and identify areas for improvement," he says. "That has had a big impact on my teaching practice."

A childhood fascination with insects led Stewart to pursue undergraduate and graduate degrees in biology education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Realizing he didn't want to spend his life doing research, he decided to pursue teaching. Despite switching gears, Stewart continued to work as a researcher, in order to pay for his teacher credential program. His research, which focused on bumble bees and their decline across the United States, inspired him to make pollinators a focus of his biology teaching at Fisher High School. Sparked by his enthusiasm, Fisher students founded a scientific research club to conduct their own research on pollinators. In addition to conducting research, the 20 students in the club have learned to write grant proposals and have been awarded \$1250 in funds to support their work.

One of the student-led projects, a recreation of natural prairie, led to broader awareness of the role of pollinators, with students leading presentations at other area schools and across the community. "The kids executed the projects from stem to stern,"

Isaac Stewart
Fisher High School
Fisher, Illinois

- Science department head, Fisher High School
- 2013 Outstanding New Biology Teacher, National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT)
- Team leader, professional learning community for new teachers
- Presenter, district professional development on backwards design
- Featured on Bloomberg News' Bloomberg EDU Honor Roll
- Presented two sessions at 2013 NABT Professional Development Conference

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TEACHER PROFILE

says Stewart, who was named 2013 Outstanding New Biology Teacher by the National Association of Biology Teachers.

His enthusiasm for science has proven contagious, says Tom Shallenberger, the school's principal. "He is a very gifted teacher, and his love for his subject area is second to none," he says, calling Stewart's teaching "challenging and exciting for students."

Seeing a need to support new teachers in his building, Stewart founded and leads the school's professional learning community for new teachers. Additionally, he has presented workshops on backwards design and other topics in his school and across the district. He credits the KSTF Teaching Fellowship with providing the perspective needed to be a leader in his building and his district. "Most teachers have a narrow sphere," he says. "With KSTF, I've gotten to communicate not only with other educators across the country, but with the people who are writing the standards and authors publishing books on my subjects. I'm getting a first-hand account, and a more global perspective on the state of education and the future of education. It's an endless opportunity."

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