Combining GK-8 Outreach Activities with Graduate Education

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The University of Oregon’s NSF-funded GK-12 project supports chemistry and physics graduate students to establish state-of-the-art, inquiry-driven science curricula in rural, low socio-economic status eastern and central Oregon schools. GK-12 Fellows are assigned annually to an elementary or middle school which are geographically remote from the UO campus. Fellows are hosted by school communities for three, two-week-long stays each year, serving as ‘scientists-in-residence,’ and co-teach science kits alongside regular classroom teachers with a goal of sustained use of kit curricula after direct program involvement is finished. The program seeks to test and refine a ‘remote model’ whereby universities play a significant role in improving science instruction at rural, remote schools and school districts with diverse populations and significant percentages of economically disadvantaged families. Fellows supported by the GK-12 funds find this to be a challenging and energizing complement to their doctoral work.