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**News Release Shared with Permission from the UF Thompson Earth Systems Institute
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Teachers, scientists partner to develop science lesson plans rooted in current research

GAINESVILLE, Fla. — K-12 science teachers from across Florida will spend four days this summer immersed in a virtual research lab experience as part of a professional development workshop hosted by the UF Thompson Earth Systems Institute's [Scientist in Every Florida School Program](#) titled "The Nature of Science."

Escambia County School District will be represented by Chris Norris from Ransom Middle School and Karen Bruening from Pensacola High School. *(This paragraph was added using information provided by Rebecca Burton, Communications Manager, UF Thompson Earth Systems Institute.)*

From July 6-10, 40 teachers representing 10 counties Alachua, Broward, Clay, Escambia, Hillsborough, Lee, Levy, Marion, Palm Beach and St. Lucie counties selected from a pool of more than 90 applicants will assist scientists with ongoing research projects. Throughout the week, the teachers will work with scientists to develop lesson plans that help students better understand what's known in education as the "nature of science," or the tools, theories and skills scientists used to carry out research. It's a win-win, said [Brian Abramowitz](#), K-12 education and outreach coordinator for SEFS.

"Through this workshop, teachers will not only be able to actually do the science and build connections with the scientists, but they will also be able to develop practical and relatable lesson plans that fit into their curriculum and meet state learning standards," Abramowitz said. "Additionally, scientists build their K-12 teaching skillset, which can help them better communicate with the general public."

Due to COVID-19 precautions, the workshop will take place entirely online using videoconferencing technology like Zoom. Abramowitz added that providing the training this way can also help equip teachers with virtual teaching tools should classes continue online come fall.

Ten laboratories from the University of Florida, University of Miami and Florida Atlantic University have agreed to host a small group of teachers for the week. The scientists' research interests range from wildfire ecology and oceanography to natural hazards

infrastructure engineering. In addition to hosting teachers for the workshop, the scientists have agreed to make at least one virtual visit to the teachers' classrooms this fall.

"During the classroom visit, students will be introduced to current scientific research as well as science role models and careers," said [Stephanie Killingsworth](#), K-12 education and outreach coordinator for SEFS. "We really want to bridge the gap between academic research and K-12 classrooms through this and future collaborations."

This is the second time SEFS has hosted a workshop of this kind. Last year, 34 teachers traveled to the University of Florida for similar in-person lab experiences focused on the biosphere.

Jonathan Greene, a K-5 teacher at Liberty Park Elementary School in Palm Beach County, was one of the participants at the inaugural program, and will be returning this year.

"The workshop expanded my community of likeminded people who believe in the importance of critical thinking skills that science education fosters," Greene said.

"Working with scientists through SEFS has inspired me to create and share engaging standards-based lessons that foster an application of knowledge in real-world situations that become memorable experiences instead of a lesson that will soon be forgotten."

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The University of Florida Thompson Earth Systems Institute's Scientist in Every Florida School program aims to build long-term collaborative relationships between teachers and scientists, better integrate current scientific research and big data into classroom lessons that adhere to Florida Sunshine State Standards and connect a scientist with every school in the state. In its first year, about 500 teachers and 150 scientists have participated in the program, which has reached more than 200 public schools representing over 16,000 students. More information is available at: <https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/earth-systems/scientist-in-every-florida-school/>

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Photos from last year's in-person training will be posted on Facebook on the page, Escambia Schools Public Relations. All four photos were taken by Jeff Gage with the Florida Museum.

For information about Escambia County's public schools go to: <https://ecsd-fl.schoolloop.com/> Like ECSD on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ecsdfl.

Go to the Escambia Schools Public Relations page on Facebook, www.facebook.com/ecsd.public to see video and photos of other recent events.

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