

Teachers give NIEHS an A-plus rating

By Kelly Lenox

In late July, eleven teachers from North Carolina schools completed the NIEHS Science, Teachers, and Research Summer Institute (STaRS) program (see [story](#)). A few weeks later, the teachers' evaluations have been compiled, and NIEHS earned excellent marks.

"STaRS represents the future of science education," said one educator.

Each of the program elements garnered high praise. "The lab activities, the lectures, and the facility tours helped me to understand the complexity of the research and all the parts that make a good study," said another.

The participants also valued the close collaboration with colleagues from across the state who shared similar goals and challenges.

NIEHS offered the program in collaboration with North Carolina New Schools, a public-private partnership. Ondrea Austin, STEM field coordinator for the organization, echoed the teachers' enthusiasm.

"Kudos to you and your team on this outstanding program, and our deep thanks once again for your exemplary leadership and partnership," wrote Austin. She noted that over half the respondents called the experience "the best professional development of their careers."

Participants gave a resounding cheer for the value of the program to them and their students. They also praised the hard work and long hours put in by NIEHS scientists and staff. "They were very welcoming and bent over backwards to provide us with an experience that we can take back to our classrooms," said another participant.

"We all are very pleased that this first year of STaRS serving a group of participants was such a success. We met our expectations, and more importantly, we met those of the teachers," said Ericka Reid, Ph.D., director of the NIEHS Office of Science Education and Diversity ([OSED](#)).



Huei-Chen Lao of OSED will continue her key role, visiting classrooms to support the teachers as they share lessons inspired by what they learned on their summer vacations. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)

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