



Mouse traps and ping pong balls illustrated sustained nuclear fission at the recent Energy for Educators conference, which suggested energy-related lesson plans and activities for 100 Idaho teachers.

Workshop provides energy lesson plans for Idaho teachers

by [Kortny Rolston](#), *INL Communications & Public Affairs*

Susan Davis wasn't sure Idaho National Laboratory's "Idaho Energy for Educators" workshop would be worth her time.

The Midway Elementary School teacher worried the content would be too complex for her first-grade students even though organizers assured her it was designed for students in grades K-12.

By the second day of the Aug. 3-6 workshop, the Rigby resident's doubts were gone.

She and a Midway colleague were already planning to cook s'mores in solar ovens to teach their students about solar energy and to use pencils, paper clips and cups to demonstrate hydropower.

"The hands-on sessions have been amazing," she said. "I've really loved all the information I've acquired. I need to incorporate more science into my classroom and these (activities) will interest my students."

That is exactly what workshop organizers hope will happen.

They've spent months working with the [Idaho Department of Education](#), which co-sponsored the event, to design lessons that explain how atoms, the sun, wind and water produce energy, and that incorporate hands-on activities teachers can use in their classrooms – no matter the grade.

"Energy is a topic everyone can relate to," said Gary Seifert, who manages [Wind Powering America's Idaho](#) region and helped organize the event for INL. "Students need to know where the power that runs their televisions and computers comes from. They need to ask good, informed questions and make informed decisions as they grow into the work force of tomorrow."

For the 100 Idaho educators who attended the workshop, the timing is perfect.

Many are being pushed to teach more science in their classrooms, since students now are regularly tested on the subject through the [Idaho Standard Achievement Test](#).

"Teachers are hungry for material they can use to teach energy and science," said Bill Cairns, a Skyline High School vice principal who works at INL during the summer. "They just don't have time to review all the information out there on energy to see what's legitimate and build a new curriculum from it."



Melinda Hamilton, INL's director of education programs, said the lab is committed to training teachers about energy and promoting science, technology, engineering and math education in Idaho schools.

INL not only helped organize and sponsor the energy workshop, it ensured the teachers who attended received continuing education credits. [Battelle Energy Alliance](#), a nonprofit organization that operates INL for the [U.S. Department of Energy](#), paid for the cost of the credits.

Lab employees also helped create a new Web site for teachers, www.energyforeducators.org.

INL and the Idaho Department of Education co-sponsored the workshop to help teachers bring energy concepts to their classrooms.

"For every teacher we reach, we touch hundreds of students. Think of the impact that is making on Idaho education," Hamilton said.

Davis hopes INL and the Idaho Department of Education continue to sponsor the workshop. If they do, she plans to keep attending to find new ways to interest her students in science and energy.



INL helped teachers earn continuing education credits for attending the workshop.

"The information presented and lessons were worth it," she said. "It gave me a lot of new knowledge that I want to take back to my classroom and share with my students."

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