



Staff and Lead Teacher Bios



Sharon Thielen Ph.D. is Kansas Corn's Education Director. Previously, she was Assistant Dean for K-State's College of Agriculture for seven years and has over 14 years of experience in higher education focused on agriculture and education. She received three degrees from K-State: Bachelor's Degree in Agribusiness and Master's and Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction. As a Kansas farmer and rancher, she is passionate about agriculture and the opportunities it provides to youth as well as helping educators add agriculture lessons in the classroom.



Erin Rios serves as Kansas Corn's Education Programs Manager. Prior to joining the Kansas Corn staff, she worked for American Eagle Outfitters DC as a Human Resources Generalist for seven years where she oversaw event planning and leave management. She received a Bachelor's Degree in Communication from Emporia State University in 2006. Erin loves being "Santa" to teachers. She coordinates workshops and the ordering and distribution of classroom supplies to educators around the state.



James Burk grew up in a farming family and has taught biology, chemistry and physics in Kansas for 21 years. He received both his Bachelor of Science degree in Biology and a Master's Degree in Science Education from Fort Hays State University in 2014. His focus is engaging students in doing science. He is currently a high school science teacher at Trego Community High School in WaKeeney.



Brent Conner has been teaching middle school science for six years. He completed his undergraduate studies at Kansas Wesleyan University and earned a Doctor of Chiropractic degree from Logan College of Chiropractic. After spending over eight years as a practicing chiropractor, he earned his Alternate Route to Teaching Certificate from Emporia State University. Brent teaches 7th and 8th grade science at South Middle School in Salina.



Lacie Fair has been teaching biology in Kansas for the past 12 years. She received her undergraduate degrees in Biology and Secondary Education from K-State and her Master's Degree in Special Education from Fort Hays State University. Her focus is bringing authentic hands-on science experiences to students of all ability levels. She currently teaches biology at Newton High School and is working with an interdisciplinary team of teachers to create and teach an agriculture career academy.



Brian Nelson has been teaching in the Wichita Public Schools for 19 years. He teaches 8th grade science at Hadley Middle School where he also coaches the Science Olympiad team and girls' basketball. Brian has a Bachelor of Arts in Education and a Master of Curriculum and Instruction from Wichita State University. He believes in giving back to the profession and conducts workshops throughout the state. Brian believes strongly in a highly engaging lab-based approach to teaching science and hands-on project-based learning.



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Chris Remmich has been teaching science in Kansas for six years. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Chemistry Education from Pittsburg State University. Chris is currently teaching chemistry, zoology and Bbotechnology at Garden City High School. He loves using current technology and hands-on labs to prepare students for their future careers.



Shelly Robinson has taught science for 28 years and teaches at Santa Fe Trail High School in Carbondale. She taught for 20 years at the middle school level and the last eight years she has taught high school biology, energy science and earth science. Shelly earned her Bachelor's Degree in Biology from Southwestern College and a Master's in Curriculum and Instruction from St. Mary College. Her passion is working with students to help them find their niche in life to pursue a career path that will enable them to be successful and accomplished.



Jessica Sadler has been a teacher in Kansas for the last seven years. She spent one year teaching 3rd grade and four years teaching 5th grade before moving to the middle school level. Jessica now teaches 6th grade science and facilitates the STEM Connection program at Oregon Trail Middle School in Olathe. Jessica attended the University of Kansas and holds a Master's Degree in Special Education. Jessica's goal in teaching is to provide authentic and engaging learning opportunities that push students to new heights.



Blake Smith has been teaching earth science, biology, and emerging technologies at Maize South High School for the past eight years. He holds a Master of Art in Teaching degree from Wichita State University, and a Master of Educational Administration degree from Emporia State University. Before becoming a teacher, Blake was a broadcast meteorologist for ten years. He is passionate about showing students real world applications in science.



Bill Welch has taught biology for 29 years at Derby High School, Mulvane High School, and Wichita North High School. He currently teaches biology and AP biology at Derby High School. He has a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Newman University and a Master of Science in Biology from Emporia State University. He has a passion for student-generated research and has had numerous students present and publish research. Bill teaches science with the premise that students only really learn science by doing science.

Seed to STEM is a program of the Kansas Corn Commission. Workshops and curriculum provided by:

