

Oregon Connections/Nepris Quotes and Scenarios

Note: We can arrange for interviews with any of these individuals. Please contact LuAnn Sodano luannsodano@hotmail.com 770-356-5030 or Jennifer Harrison jennifer@jharrisonpr.com 916-716-0636

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“We must inspire our future workforce to pursue STEM degrees by making them seem real, and we must focus on strategies that are both impactful and scalable.”

“Teacher and industry are working toward the same goals through Oregon Connections. This is a concrete way to work together, right now, not 10 years down the road.”

Maureen Foelkl, teacher

former third grade teacher at Chapman Hills Elementary School in Salem, Oregon. Now an independent contractor writing curriculum with alignment to STEM.

“Bringing in Nepris gave my students clear examples of the engineering process. For example, Chantelle Sims was able to demonstrate how to create parts that would be specific for an engineer’s design. Elaine Kearney gave real-world examples of green roof designs. That was one of the requirements for all student prototypes. It was very helpful to have the sessions recorded. We returned to the green roof presentation to review the layers that needed to be applied prior to planting.”

“It was helpful as young engineers to see the process at hand, not just to look a photo in a book. They were able to apply the skills to scale using similar materials.”

“These speakers encouraged my students to attend school. We as teachers know when a special event is on the schedule, it inspires students to be active learners while attending school on time. I’m sure they enjoyed my teaching but to have an expert speak about a subject brings authenticity to the lesson. My students asked questions that I could not begin to answer due to the context of the specialty area. No textbook I know can come close to interacting with students in that fashion.”

“It opened their doors to occupations that could hone in on their interest. I have my students tell me at the beginning of the year what they might want to do after high school. The most frequent answers were a vet, a zoo keeper, a teacher and someone in the military. These are all grand occupations but somewhat limiting. At the end of the year, I had students tell me they want to work on plane engines, become a chemical engineer, become an inventor and open their own business, teach others about how to stay safe, lead environmental causes, write their own code and still care for animals.”

Dylan McCann, teacher

Sixth grade math and science teacher at Twality Middle School in Tigard, Oregon

“I have been using Oregon Connections extensively over the past three years. My students have had the opportunity to see actual professionals using things we have been learning in the classroom that gives an answer to that age old question, “When am I ever going to use this?” We’ve met with bakers, programmers, military defense engineers, naval architects, pilots, etc... I also purposely try to bring professionals in that can personally connect with my young girls and students of color. I think it is extremely important to give students in the underrepresented demographics in the STEM fields to see adults that they can personally see themselves in, look up to, and have conversations with.

For instance, last year, my students were learning about thermal energy transference, and we had a young African American woman talk to my students about what it is like to design, build, and test rockets and what it’s like to get to blow things up. She spoke about her journey as an African American woman through school as a major minority and she showed my students that with perseverance and a great attitude, they can achieve anything they ever could want.

Giving my students the opportunity to connect with real people using what we are learning is invaluable to the core of education of students. Without the real-world exposure, it goes no context to what we are doing in the classroom. I have seen my students remember concepts, the people, and the maintain the excitement for careers they never thought possible, years after a visit with a professional. Bringing professionals into my classroom will continue to be a part of my teaching strategy for years to come.”

Jill Hubbard, teacher

“My computer science students connected to Sam De La Garza, an engineer in Texas. He shared Arduino projects he had worked on and gave students a virtual tour of his work environment. He also shared his path to becoming an engineer which was non-traditional and encouraged and inspired a number of my students.”

“This year, I used the in-person feature to connect with Lisa Taylor from Oregon Tech. We're partnering around a high altitude balloon project for the solar eclipse. Her students came to our school with their ground communication station and shared experiments they're running as part of this project.”

“I participated virtually in the Tour the FortiExpress Mobile Cybersecurity Lab where my students virtually learned about networking hardware and software as well as cyber-security from industry experts. They also learned about Oregon Tech's programs - a higher educational institution located a few miles away helping to form pathways between high school and college. This was a multi-classroom session and included a middle school classroom within my district. It was a great way to form connections between middle and high school students and teachers too!”

Chantelle Sims, Project Engineer, NW Rapid Mfg, LLC