

STEM Outreach Success

UNH Manchester students delivered virtual STEM activities for second graders

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UNH MANCHESTER'S STEM TEACHING FELLOWS MEET VIA ZOOM WITH BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB STEM DIRECTOR KEITH DARLING TO PLAN OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

The COVID pandemic provided no shortage of opportunities for organizations to adapt, and that's precisely what four [UNH Manchester](#) STEM Teaching Fellows did when they developed outreach activities for second graders at Manchester's Boys and Girls Club during the fall 2020 semester.

[Associate Professor of Biology and Biotechnology Patricia Halpin](#) has been performing and studying science outreach in the New Hampshire area and beyond for over 20 years, but the 2020 teaching fellows were presented with a unique challenge—how to deliver fun educational activities to elementary school-age students remotely.

“There’s no reason to wait until the pandemic is over,” Halpin said. “You can still do outreach successfully. Why allow these children to lose out on this opportunity?”

Four [biological sciences](#) and [biotechnology](#) students—Jonathan Belmont, Catherine Aborn, Lejla Hodzic and Mamady Sankoh—volunteered to participate in this iteration of the program. They met every week to design their own educational activities and coordinated with Boys and Girls Club STEM director Keith Darling who provided the necessary supplies and materials. Every week the fellows performed a dry run of their presentation and received feedback from their peers, tweaking and changing different aspects until they were ready to make their final presentations. Presentation topics included the function of the brain, the respiratory and digestive systems and the heart.

“Everyone needs to know more about how their body works,” Halpin said, stressing that national, as well as local, science literacy is quite low. “The fellows created engaging activities which enabled them to explain the physiological concepts they were teaching to young children. We really need scientists to focus on and enhance their communication skills in order to educate all audiences. That’s important.”

The teaching fellows also had the opportunity to share their activities with more than just the students. All four fellows submitted abstracts that were accepted by the American Physiological Society and presented at the remote Experimental Biology Meeting in April 2021.

“Unfortunately it wasn’t face to face, but it’s still a huge meeting,” Halpin said. “It’s an amazing opportunity for undergraduates to present at one of the largest biological science meetings in the world.”

The fellows were provided with an additional scholarship credit as their abstracts were published in the FASEB Journal.

This year was also the first time the fellowship was paid, thanks to a [UNH Collaborative Research Excellence \(CoRE\) Initiative grant](#) secured by [Computer Science Professor Mihaela Sabin](#).

Interested in learning more about the STEM Teaching Fellows creative and innovative teaching plans? Find their abstracts below.

[Jonathan Belmont: The STEM Teaching Fellows Program Effectively Teaches First Grade Students About the Brain via Zoom](#)

[Catherine Aborn: Learning About the Respiratory System is Fun for 1st Graders Using a Gas Exchange Relay Activity via Zoom](#)

[Lejla Hodzic: From Plate to Waste: A Hands-On Activity to Dramatize the Function of the Digestive System to First Graders via Zoom](#)

Mamady Sankoh: STEM Outreach via Zoom: Effectively Teaching a Cardiovascular Lesson to First Graders Using a Hands-On Heart Model Activity

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UNH MANCHESTER



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