

Alumna Taylor Planz Wins National Science Teachers Association Award for New Teachers

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UNH alumna Taylor Langkau Planz '12 '13G was one of only 25 science teachers nationwide to receive the Maitland P. Simmons Memorial Award for New Teachers from the [National Science Teachers Association \(NSTA\)](#) at their annual conference in Nashville, Tenn. last month. NSTA is the largest professional organization in the world promoting excellence and innovation in science teaching and learning. Their annual awards program honors K–12 teachers, principals, professors and other science education professionals for their outstanding work and achievement in science education.

Planz, who graduated from UNH with a B.A. in earth sciences in 2012 and an M.A.T. in secondary education in 2013, is now a science teacher at Bennett Middle School in Bennett, Colo.

“My goal in science education is to spark students' curiosity,” says Planz. “I know that if they are interested in something that they will naturally be more engaged. I try to relate everything we learn back to real life and my students' backgrounds.”

An innovative teacher, Planz engages her students through hands-on learning, often going outside to find real-world examples of her topics. This year, Planz started a new program at her

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school, “Reading Buddies,” that connects middle school students with first graders for reading lessons around science concepts and new words. She hopes to expand the program to a wider variety of grades next year.

“Seeing middle school students connect with first grade students and teach them science was absolutely magical,” says Planz.

Planz credits UNH programs and faculty for helping her get where she is today. She received funding from the Robert Noyce Scholarship Program without which, she says, she may not have been able to complete her graduate degree. Several professors shaped the teacher she has become, she says. Within the Department of Education, Joe Onosko played a pivotal role in helping her decide to become a teacher. Tim Churchard helped Planz understand the emotional side of teaching. Eleanor Abrams provided support and advice specifically focused on science teaching. And Bruce Turnquist, her internship supervisor, couldn’t have been better, says Planz: “The supportive role he provided helped me thrive in my first experience as a full-time teacher.”

WRITTEN [Susan Dumais '88 '02G](#) | College of Liberal Arts

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