



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**National Science Teaching Association Celebrates
its 2026 Teacher Awards Honorees**

Science Educators Nationwide Lauded for Outstanding Achievement

MCLEAN, Va.—April 13, 2026—The [National Science Teaching Association](#) (NSTA) announces the recipients of its 2026 NSTA Awards program, which honors K–12 teachers, principals, professors, and other science education professionals for their outstanding work and achievement in science education. Honorees will be celebrated during a special evening Teacher Awards event at the NSTA National Conference on Science Education in Anaheim, California, on April 17. The student recipient of the Angela Award will be recognized separately at a private ceremony coordinated with the student’s school and faculty.

“Science has the power to open doors—to new ideas, new possibilities, and new futures,” said NSTA President Beverly DeVore-Wedding, Ph.D. “The recipients of the 2026 NSTA Awards represent the very best of our profession through their commitment to excellence, creativity, and innovation in teaching and learning. They cultivate classrooms where curiosity thrives, and students are encouraged to explore, question, and think deeply, and where every learner gains the confidence to engage with science in meaningful ways. We are proud to celebrate these outstanding educators and the lasting impact they have on their students, their schools, and the future of science education.”

NSTA is proud to announce the following award recipients.

Angela Award

- **Nethania Ajan**, eighth grade student, Canyon Vista Middle School, Austin, Texas

Maitland P. Simmons Memorial Award for New Teachers

- **Shelita Augustus**, science teacher, Yvonne B. Miller High School, Petersburg, Virginia
- **Jonathan Bailey**, eighth grade science teacher, Gila Vista Jr. High School, Yuma, Arizona
- **Joyeth Brown**, science teacher, Pin Oak Middle School, Bellaire, Texas
- **Kole Hobbs**, chemistry teacher, Hillsborough High School, Hillsborough, New Jersey
- **Ariela Ikezawa**, second and fourth grade teacher, MMSC, Seattle, Washington
- **Clare Nolan**, science teacher, Wolcott College Prep, Chicago, Illinois
- **Mary Oloyede**, science teacher, Francis Hammond Middle School, Alexandria, Virginia
- **Divya Palakkil-Irinav**, chemistry teacher, Paradise Valley High School, Phoenix, Arizona
- **Swapnila Pawar**, seventh grade science teacher, Strawberry Hill School, Stamford, Connecticut
- **Gabryella Wilder**, biology science teacher, Northern Lehigh, Slatington, Pennsylvania

Robert E. Yager Foundation Excellence in Teaching Awards

- **Rebecca Maynard**, District I, science teacher, Framingham High School, Framingham, Massachusetts
- **Sarmistha Ghosh**, District VI, biology teacher, Hawthorne Academy of Health Sciences Charlotte, North Carolina
- **Matthew Holden**, District VII, teacher, Fayetteville High School, Fayetteville, Arkansas
- **Chris Embry Mohr**, District XII, science & agriculture teacher, Olympia High School, Stanford, Illinois
- **Selene Verhofstad**, District XIII, virtual instructor, Pasadena Virtual School, Pasadena, Texas
- **Christopher Sarkonak**, District XVIII, physics and science teacher, Crocus Plains Regional Secondary School, Brandon, Manitoba Canada

Shell Science Teaching Award, *sponsored by Shell USA, Inc.*

- *Awardee:* **Melissa Kowalski**, middle and high school science teacher, Put-in-Bay School, Put-in-Bay, Ohio
- *Finalist:* **Jason Dokie**, elementary science teacher, Helendale Elementary School, Helendale, California
- *Finalist:* **Crystal Doi**, elementary STEM teacher, Kapunahala Elementary School, Kaneohe, Hawaii

Shell Science Lab Regional Challenge, *sponsored by Shell USA, Inc., outfitted by Flinn Scientific*

- *Grand-Prize Winner (Elementary School Level):* **Mistie Barron**, Fairmont Elementary School, Pasadena, Texas
- *Grand-Prize Winner (Middle School Level):* **Erica Carter**, Houma Junior High School, Houma, Louisiana
- *Grand-Prize Winner (High School Level):* **Jose Rivas**, Lennox Math, Science, and Technology Academy, Lennox, California

Shell Urban Science Educators Development Award, *sponsored by Shell USA, Inc.*

- **Nana Baffour**, science teacher, David Crockett Middle School, Richmond, Texas
- **Jalavender Clowney**, science teacher, Saluda Trail Middle School, Rock Hill, South Carolina
- **Sierra Graves**, science teacher, Thrive Christian Academy, Tucker, Georgia
- **Kinya Heard**, science teacher, Park Forest Middle School, Baton Rouge, Louisiana
- **Danielle English Jones**, science teacher, Proviso West School, Hillside, Illinois
- **Tiffany Scott**, science teacher, Grovetown Elementary School, Grovetown, Georgia
- **Stephanie Trimble**, science teacher, Brusly Elementary School, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Sylvia Shugrue Award for Elementary School Teachers

- **Charlotte Catalina Collins**, TK/Kindergarten elementary school teacher, Los Berros Elementary School, Lompoc, California

NSTA encourages science educators to apply for its 2026 Teacher Awards. Visit <https://www.nsta.org/awards-and-recognition-program> for information.

About NSTA

The [National Science Teaching Association](https://www.nsta.org) (NSTA) is a vibrant community of 35,000 science educators and professionals committed to best practices in teaching science and its impact on student learning. NSTA offers high quality science resources and continuous learning so that science educators grow professionally and excel in their career. For new and experienced teachers alike, the NSTA community offers the opportunity to network with like-minded peers at the national level, connect with mentors and leading researchers, and learn from the best in the field. For more information, visit www.nsta.org, or follow NSTA on [X](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), [LinkedIn](#), or [Bluesky](#).

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