

Empowered STEM

On-going Educator Support

Our goal is to ensure each Empowered STEM educator receives the support needed, through a combination of in-person meetings, virtual meetings, online resources and connection to experts and volunteers.

In-person Support:

- Training - Every educator participating in our program receives initial comprehensive training from Empowered STEM staff. Trainers learn about the Empowered STEM Process, receive program materials, and are trained in how to support educators as they implement the program.
 - Each Empowered STEM Trainer participates in a three-day train-the-trainer program to develop skills, knowledge and develop training plans to conduct training in their community.
 - In the first year after training, each trainer participates in small group, virtual monthly meetings to reinforce their training and to address challenges and questions that arise.
 - In subsequent years, Empowered STEM Trainers meet with peers through our online network of trainers, and will have the opportunity to participate in twice a year refresher webinars
- Follow-up Support - Each participating educator receives personalized one-on-one or small group follow up from Empowered STEM staff and/or Empowered STEM trained trainers at least three times a year. These follow up sessions are tailored to the specific training and support needs of the individual educator.

Virtual Support:

- Video Chats - Educators are invited, and encouraged, to participate in virtual peer chats with Empowered STEM staff and trainers to share experiences, successes, and discuss issues responsive to educator needs.
- Webinars - Empowered STEM staff offer webinars several times a year, in response to educator issues and questions that arise in training and through educator feedback.
- Individualized Email - Educators are encouraged to email Empowered STEM staff with their questions and challenges on program implementation. Emails are answered within 24 hours, providing information and connections to other forms of program support as appropriate. Educator emails also provides feedback on educator needs that inform our webinars and virtual chats.

Online Resources:

Empowered STEM provides a range of resources to educators via our website (earthforceresources.org). These supports include templates, activities, informational videos, and demonstration videos. This site is newly developed and will continue to evolve and change in the coming months.

In 2014, we assessed support we provided to educators. Over 80% of educators rated the support as Excellent or Very Good.

Expert Volunteers:

We augment the support educators receive from educational professionals with expert volunteers. Empowered STEM provides training to these volunteers in our process and how to work with youth. Empowered STEM engages a network of approximately 450 volunteers with backgrounds in environmental management, environmental assessment, project management, and public speaking. Those experts support classrooms in several ways including:

- Helping educators as they conduct environmental inventories;
- Providing background information about local environmental issues;
- Supporting students as they identify the best ways to influence local policy making;
- Reviewing and critiquing student civic action project plans; and
- Coaching students to present their findings / projects to outside organizations and officials.

In 2017, we conducted an evaluation of participating volunteers. Over 90% of those volunteers reported that the training and support they received adequately prepared them for their role in the program.