

Geophysical Information for Teachers: Wave Tanks, Homemade Clouds, Glacial Goo, and More!

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AGU is deeply committed to fostering the next generation of Earth and space scientists. Union activities contribute to this effort in many ways, one of which is partnering with the National Earth Science Teacher's Association (NESTA) to hold the Annual Geophysical Information for Teachers (GIFT) workshop at AGU's annual Fall Meeting. GIFT allows K–12 science teachers to hear about the latest geoscience research from the scientists making the discoveries, explore new classroom resources for their students, and visit exhibits and technical sessions of the AGU meeting for free.

In 2011 AGU worked with NESTA to develop an improved rigorous and open application process for scientists and education professionals who wished to work as a team and present their Earth and space science work to teachers, as well as lead the educators in a hands-on, classroom-ready

activity. Twenty-four applications were received for five slots, so the selected presentations (on tsunamis, clouds, field campaigns, glaciers, and volcanoes), chosen through a peer-review process, truly represented the best ways of getting cutting-edge science into the classroom.

During GIFT 2011, teachers participated in hands-on activities involving wave tanks (to model tsunami activity), homemade clouds, glacier goo (a slimy, homemade silly putty that can be used to model how glaciers move), and more. As part of efforts to make GIFT materials available to all users, not just those who were at Fall Meeting, materials from GIFT 2011 (including video of individual presentations and activities as well as supplemental materials) are available on AGU's education Web page (<http://www.agu.org/education>) and will be on NESTA's Windows to the Universe pages (http://www.windows2universe.org/teacher_resources/2011_AGU-NESTA_GIFT_Workshop.html).

Workshop evaluation results have shown us how much teachers value GIFT, and AGU is committed to improving it every year. In 2011, 60% of the teachers participating in the workshop had been to GIFT before. They hailed from eight U.S. states and Canada. On a scale of 1 to 6, with 1 being outstanding, the average rating for this year's workshop was 1.6.

A successful workshop could not be run without the scientists and education professionals who share their work with the GIFT participants, and this work is deeply appreciated by the teachers. One educator said of a particular team of presenters, "Outstanding modeling of teacher behavior." Another added, "This year's sessions were some of the best!" Those interested in learning more about how to participate in GIFT, please contact Bethany Holm Adamec (see below) or Pranoti Asher (pasher@agu.org).

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