

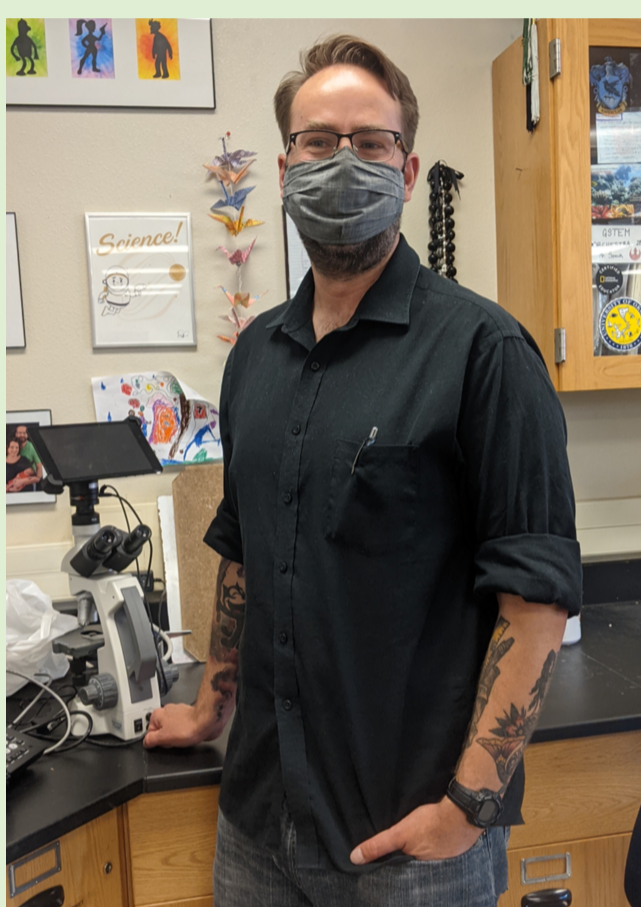

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## Meet Chris Speck Middle School Science Teacher

A teacher's story that will inspire you...from growing coral reefs in the desert, intriguing middle school students, and bringing science to life...

Learn more about this passionate teacher...



During the pandemic, as students were out of the classroom and learning from home, the community learned how hard it is to teach. What drives someone to become a teacher? How do they stay engaged in a career in academics, and...how do we as non-educators support them? **Christopher Speck** is a middle school science teacher at **Garfield STEM Magnet School** and shares his story of entering the field.

Chris writes, "School was fairly easy for me. It was enjoyable as well. I didn't understand why that wasn't the case for everyone and I wanted to be able to effect change that would help more people have the experiences I did. I continue to be inspired by my amazing colleagues and students. Their questions, frustrations, and efforts bolster my resolve to work as hard as possible to maximize my impact in the classroom."

I arrived in my first classroom at Lowell Elementary with a few dozen aging kids' books and a polite assortment of school supplies. My situation has changed, but a lack of resources significantly affected me for years. Disengagement is always an issue. Students come with a scattershot understanding of science and often a seeming disinterest in the subject.

My old boss at Sandia National Labs' Advanced Materials Labs once told me "If it's not hands-on, it's not gonna work". That has been my mantra since 2015. Students have to see science, do science, and believe they can work with science. My main goal is to take science out of the book and into their hands.

I had a student a few years ago who struggled in all their subjects including mine, but they were thrilled about project-based learning (PBL). They quickly finished all their other work so they could get started on the "Up House" (the house from the movie "Up") that we launched into the stratosphere. Their grades went up in my class as well. Sometimes students need to feel successful in one thing to believe they can be successful in everything else, and hands-on labs are a great way to make this happen.

I could talk until the end of the Earth about the challenges of teaching during the pandemic, but a sufficient imagination is more than capable of understanding how difficult it has been. The past year robbed us of our velocity, and these challenges demand an asymmetrical response. That is what innovation provides. It gives teachers the resources required to get learning into their students' hands. It is hopeful because it allows students to plan for the future. Innovation piques interest."

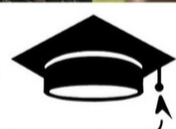
**How has he been innovative?**

**Stay tuned for tomorrow's email to take a further peek into Mr. Speck's class!**

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