Getting Started with NEON

Community Member Guide

NEON is a professional network designed for elementary teachers, STEM teachers, future elementary and STEM teachers, scientists, engineers, and other professionals who want to support STEM teachers in their important work.

The purpose of NEON is to help K-12 teachers and STEM professionals:

- Find each other based on areas of expertise, interests, and needs
- Develop effective collaborations
- Learn from and support each other, and
- Find teaching, learning, and professional development resources.

To become a member of NEON, create an account.

If you are already a member, log in to enter NEON.

Learn more about NEON:

- Introduction (zip - 9.3 MB)
- Creating an Account (zip - 49.2 MB)
- Settings & Options (zip - 24.8 MB)
- Connections (zip - 41.4 MB)
- People (zip - 32.7 MB)
- Groups & Forums (zip - 56.7 MB)

Or watch the entire video (zip - 137 MB)
Welcome to NEON, NASA’s online teacher professional development network.

What is NEON?
A professional learning community, open to elementary and secondary STEM teachers, future STEM teachers, scientists, engineers, and other professionals who want to support STEM teachers in their important work.

What is the goal of NEON?
To help K-12 teachers and STEM professionals find each other based on expertise/needs/interests, develop effective collaborations, learn from and support each other, and find teaching/learning/professional development resources.
Welcome to NEON, NASA’s online teacher professional development network.

The goals of this community guide are:

• help you create a new account
• learn how to use the connection screens to find other people of similar interests to you
• use the search function to find people, resources or groups that are of interest to you
• show you how to communicate with others through NEON
On the NEON welcome page (http://neon.psu.edu), you will find links for creating a new account, as well as helpful videos that can assist in familiarizing you with the online community.
Enter your First & Last Name, Email address (for getting notifications from Chris Gamrat, Community Manager), and select an Occupation. In addition, please give a short description of why you are joining the network. Once you click the Submit button (after keying in the security word), you will be assigned a temporary Login and Password.
Thanks for joining NEON. You can now begin using our community.

We recommend that when you first enter NEON, you begin by completing the profile to describe yourself and your interests.

After completing the profile you can use the "Connections / Search" link at the left to find other members and groups that match your interests.

Please note your login name and password, then click the "Go to NEON" button below to begin.

Login Name: dlg5034@psu.edu  
Password: Kh3EER

Remember your password.
Type in your given information (Login Name & Password) and then click ‘Enter’ in order to access the NEON community.
What you should know about NASA’s online community:

NEON works on a unique profile-matching basis. That is, the network matches you with people of similar interests through the profile you create.

It is essential that you fill out your profile as completely as possible in order to get the most out of NEON. Filling in the profile screens takes about five (5) minutes.

Any profile field that is marked with a * (red asterisk) is required. Your profile information can always be edited at any time you are logged into the NEON network.
Once you have signed in for the first time, please read the User Acceptance screen and then click ‘I Agree’ to move to the next screen.
On the first profile screen (Contact Information), some of the fields may already be completed for you. Feel free to change any of this information, and then fill in the remaining blanks. ‘Organization’ and ‘Title’ are required fields.
By scrolling down on the ‘Contact Information’ screen, you will find the ‘Type’ field. This is important for finding particular kinds of people on NEON. Please select one: Teacher (K-12), Other Educator (professor, science center manager, etc.), Scientist/Engineer, NEON/AESP Staff (current AESP personnel), or NASA Staff (other NASA employees). Please DO NOT select Resource as a type.
On the second profile screen (Tags), you drag identifiers up from the list below to describe yourself for the four (4) categories. You must have at least one identifier in each category in order to proceed to the next profile screen. Also, you can rank an identifier by dragging it further up or further down in a particular field.

**REMEMBER:** NEON matches you with other people based on your profile. Therefore, the more identifiers you pick (maximum of 10 per category) and rank, the better your matches will be!
The third profile screen (More Details) is a way for you to personalize your NEON profile. These questions were designed by the Community Manager for you to provide information that further describes you to community members who may want to start a conversation with you. Therefore, the more you complete on this screen, the better others will get to know you.
On the final profile screen (My Media & Networks), you can further personalize your NEON profile by adding a portrait of yourself, photos to share on the network, a webcam video, and/or links to your Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc. web pages.

To add these items, simple click “Upload” or “Add” where you see them in the profile screen.
Once your profile is complete, the My Matches screen appears. This default display, called the ‘Pin View,’ shows you 1,000 other NEON members. The pin in the center represents you, with other pins at varying distances from you (depending on how much they have in common with the identifiers you chose). In addition, different colored pins represent different types of people (for example, a red pin denotes a K-12 teacher). Purple pins are for resources (for example, classes, jobs or educational materials).
For more information on other NEON users at a glance, click on the ‘List View’ tab in upper right corner of screen. You can sort columns by clicking on that column’s heading or jump to another list page by clicking on any number at the bottom of your screen. Rank shows how closely you match with another community member. Click on a person’s name to bring up their profile card (discussed on later slide).
In order to see all the identifiers people have chosen, switch to ‘Tag View.’ Here, you can see what’s important to your matches by word size. Hover your cursor over a word in order to view its Rank and number of times it was selected (Count). Finally, the tags move in response to your mouse – move the cursor to the left and the identifiers will become animated and reorganize their priority in relation to the cursor.
Use the Map View to find matches that are geographically close to you. This particular view is also tied into the Search functions (described on later slides) so that you can limit your matches to within a certain radius from your location.
If you are interested in searching the NEON community by Type, then while in the Pin View click on Type in the Legend (see blue arrows). When a group type is clicked, all those colored pins are hidden. To bring those pins back, just click again on the group type.
Using the Search Functions

You can also search the NEON community by keywords. Just type your search word into the blank field on the left control panel (orange arrows). To execute the search, click on the magnifying glass icon. To clear the search, just delete your keyword and press enter.
Using the Search Functions

For more sophisticated searches, click on the ‘Advanced Search’ button on the left control panel (orange arrows). This brings up a dialog box where you can customize your search by distance, tag identifiers, fields and/or user types. Once you have typed in your search parameters, then click ‘Apply.’ You can also save searches for future reference.

‘Tags’ Dialog Box

‘Fields’ Dialog Box
Once you have executed your search, you can view anyone’s information by clicking on their Pin (in ‘Pin View’) or name (in ‘List View’). This brings up the profile card, which initially highlights identifiers that you and the other person have in common – they are highlighted in blue. Clicking the tabs above the identifiers will give you more information about that person. Click ‘Send Message ‘to start a conversation 😊.
When you click on ‘Send Message,’ a dialog box pops up. In addition to typing in your subject heading and message, you can attach files, photos, a web link, and even a short video greeting. Just click on the ‘Prepare’ button and follow the instructions.
Special Interest Groups

Highlights of NEON include the numerous groups, covering many different areas of interest to members. Most of the intended interaction is meant to be done through these groups.

To look through the various groups, click on ‘Groups’ at the left control panel. You can look through all the groups or just select a category of interest to you. These groups include access to collaborative resources, forum discussions and a calendar for group members.
The Group Card

Find a group of interest and want to know more? Just click on the title or icon, and a dialog box (similar to a member’s profile card) will appear. In addition to a brief description and current count of members, you can click on any of the tabs towards the top of the card to view additional information.

If you decide that this is a group for you, then click on the ‘Join’ bar at the bottom of the dialog box.
Don’t see a group that fits your interest(s)? Then, create your own. Start by clicking the ‘Create’ button on the left control panel. Once the dialog box appears, upload an icon and then write an informative summary and description. Finally, select a Group Category and Enable the Resources, Calendars and Forums before clicking ‘Next.’
Creating a Group - Selecting Tags

Second step is to pick identifiers (tags) for your group. The same identifiers are used for individual and group profiles. Drag those identifiers that make sense for your group into the top box. You also can rank these group identifiers, like you did for your individual profile. Then click ‘Next.’
Creating a Group - Custom Tags

You can easily add additional identifiers to further describe your group. Any group member can then select these custom identifiers to add to their own profile card. Only other members of the group will see custom tags however. You, as the group manager, can edit, add, or delete custom identifiers any time you are logged into NEON.
Once you have completed the creation process, use the search function to find members to invite to your group. Each community member you invite will receive an email notification. They can then act on the invitation next time they are logged into NEON.
Forums are a great way to share ideas and resources. There is a Global Forum that anyone can read and post to. Each group also has its own specific forum you can subscribe to.

Forums are accessed by clicking ‘Forums’ on the left control panel. To read a specific topic in a forum, click on it.
Create a new discussion thread with just one click. In addition to a topic title and body, you can include web links and file attachments in your post for others to comment on.

When you start a new discussion, you are automatically subscribed which means that you receive email notifications when other members post responses. You can then login to NEON if you want/need to reply to someone’s post.
Forums - Replying to an Existing Post

One of the best things about a vibrant online community is the back-and-forth conversation that happens when people are passionate about a topic.

Feel free to weigh in on various threaded discussions. Any time you reply to a thread, make sure you also click the ‘Subscribe’ button so that you will be notified whenever somebody makes a new post in that thread.

In any response, you can style the text to add emphasis as well as provide web links that point people to more information about a particular subject.
Creating and Sharing Events

Every community member can view the Global Calendar, as well as their own Personal Calendar. Every Group also has a calendar, but only the groups that you are a member of will show. All calendars are color-coded and are listed on the control panel to the left.

To add an event, click anywhere on a date to bring up the ‘Add Event’ dialog box.
To make changes to your profile and notification settings, click on ‘Edit Settings’ in the upper right corner. This box is where you control when and what notifications you want to receive when things happen in NEON. When done, click ‘Save.’
Find Activities, Lesson Plans, etc.

This searchable repository (located at http://aespresources.psu.edu) contains hundreds of classroom activities, lesson plans, videos and other multimedia, and more...most of which is ‘NASA approved.’ Searches can be narrowed by grade level and content area. You can even upload your own resource (for other educators to use) using your NEON log-in and password.
Talk with an Education Specialist

Are you in need of just the perfect classroom activity to engage your students with? Do you have questions about how to implement a NASA-approved activity? AESP Education Specialists are available online Mondays through Fridays (except holidays) to help you with these (and other) questions at https://meeting.psu.edu/neonofficehours. More information is available at http://neon.psu.edu/officehours.

Webinars

All webinars are hosted at https://meeting.psu.edu/neon

October

Here an Earth, There an Earth, Everywhere an Earth: The Kepler Telescope Search for Habitable Planets Beyond Our Solar System
25-Oct-2012 - 5:00 - 6:00 PM Eastern
Target Audience: Grades 6 - 12
Presented by AESP Specialist: Steve Culivan
Are there other worlds, beyond our solar system, that could support life? NASA's Kepler Telescope is making important discoveries to help answer that popular question. This webinar will explore how the Kepler Telescope searches for Earth-like planets orbiting other stars using the "transit" method. Participants will also learn how to use Johannes Kepler's 3rd Law and actual Kepler Telescope data to construct graphs to record and interpret data that determines if a planet, orbiting a star in another solar system, is a candidate to possibly support "life": Klingons, Vulcans and Romulans beware.

Materials Needed (optional, if participating in activities along with presenter):
http://kepler.nasa.gov/education/activities/transitTracks/

Expected Outcomes:
Participants will explain the Kepler mission. Participants will explain and understand about planets beyond our solar system.
Several times a month, the AESP Education Specialists conduct webinars/webshops on a variety of science/math content areas or current NASA missions. These professional development opportunities are usually an hour long and you can request a certificate of participation to forward to your school board. The most current webinar schedule is kept at http://neon.psu.edu/webinars.
Help is Here When You Need It

In NEON, at the bottom of the screen, there is a ‘Help’ button. Click it to bring up a box that has helpful notes regarding every feature of the NEON Community.

If you are still stuck, please send an email to either our IT specialist (gamrat@psu.edu) or our Community Manager (weiss@psu.edu).