

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and Esteemed Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Elaine Hendrickson and I am from Presque Isle. I am here to support LD #361, "An Act to Support the Francis Malcolm Science Center." In 2012, I retired from MSAD #1, Presque Isle Middle School, after having taught 35 years first in Washburn and then in Presque Isle.

For the past three years, my team of 4 retired volunteer educators and I have been planning and delivering programs at the Science Center to traditional schools, as well as non-traditional schools to include home school groups, recreation departments, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, and adults in Aroostook County from Sherman to Madawaska.

We have developed an education philosophy (found in your packet of 2024-2025 Educational Program Offerings). One of main goals is to create educational programs that fit the programming needs of area educators. We work very hard to adapt the programs to the grade levels of each group that are interactive and provide hands-on experiences. We offer full dome programs in the Planetarium followed by related hands-on activities. For example, earlier this month we showed Rusty Rocket's Last Blast to first grade children from Easton. After the show, small groups of students "zoomed through our blow-up solar system" learning more about it. Each were awarded a certificate of completion. I received a note from teacher, thanking us for the great program and for our flexibility in scheduling.

It is important to us that students become more aware of the natural world around them. Working with a two seventh grade classes from Fort Fairfield Middle School last spring, students learned about Vernal Pools and the important role they play in our ecosystem. After an introductory program, the students, their teachers, and I explored a nearby Vernal Pool locating fairy shrimp and caddis flies. We were able to collect data to add to a study at the University of Maine in Orono. A student told me it was great to be out doing science rather than sitting in the classroom!

Another goal we have is to provide professional development for our area educators. Last year, with the help of the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, FMSC offered two professional development workshops called Trek to Totality to 77 area educators who took information back to their schools to make students more aware of what a solar eclipse is and how to protect their eyes. Educators returned to their classrooms sharing activities with their students that we did during the Make and Take Sessions. One fourth grade classroom from Mapleton wrote a book about their experiences during the eclipse and dedicated it to us! (If you want to know more about our programs, I recommend that you go to our Francis Malcolm Science Center Facebook page.)

My team and I spend more volunteer hours than we can count preparing the activities from scratch and presenting them to the students. We have done all of this on a very limited budget using materials we have at the Science Center and those donated by area schools. I hope that you will vote, Ought to Pass. In order to continue providing quality programs, we need to upgrade our planetarium to show clear and crisp images during Full Dome shows. We need to hire someone to help with the hours of administrative work that go into corresponding with educators before and after programs, thus giving us more time to spend with our families and pursuing other volunteer endeavors without feeling that we are letting down those educators and students who enjoy coming to the Science Center. Thank you for our vote. Elaine Hendrickson