

# Scientific Explorations

## Program

Platte Canyon School District  
Bailey, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

In order to engage students and families in particular academic subjects, it can be beneficial to provide more hands-on learning and experiences. In the Platte Canyon School District, elementary students are able to experience this type of learning through the Scientific Explorations Program. This program brings scientifically knowledgeable high school students and local science professionals, who are often also parents of students, into the elementary schools to help teach students in a different way.

These scientific explorations are based in the Colorado Academic Science Standards, and each exploration is a part of the district's science curriculum map. One example of an exploration was the dissection of bovine eyes under the guidance of a local eye doctor. Another exploration was an anatomy and physiology day led by ten high school students and their AP Science teacher. These explorations are intended to be hands-on and interactive for the students. Over the years, the program has evolved to be aligned with school and district achievement goals, and to connect families to the teaching and learning goals of students.

Overall, the program is linked to learning, building relationships, and encourages the participation of families. The explorations focus on building the capacity of families and professionals in the community to engage in partnerships, and connect and network. Students are able to learning subjects in a more in-depth fashion, and high school students who are teaching develop further self-confidence. Each exploration is evaluated annually to measure effectiveness and to work to improve the practice.

The district has found the explorations to be extremely effective for *both* elementary school students and high school students who are teaching. For other schools thinking of implementing this type of project, the district recommends starting with one parent/exploration to get the ball rolling. The children love to have their families come to visit and teach, and many of the best explorations come from parents.