It's time for the 39th annual Minnesota Earth Science Teachers' Association conference!

Friday, February 6, 2026

Get to know your fellow Earth science teachers from across the state at the Minnesota Earth Science Teachers' Association Annual Conference. Concurrent breakout sessions feature master Earth science educators and noted geoscience professionals. Classroom resources will be provided to all attendees.

This conference supports the teaching of the MN Earth and Space science benchmarks articulated in the MN Academic Standards in Science.

5:00 pm Thursday, February 5
MN History Center
St. Paul, MN

$10 fee as noted on the registration form.
Reserve and pay in advance.

Dinner
(Local restaurant at your expense.)
The location will be decided at a later date and will be noted in the conference confirmation letter you will receive in January.

Friday, February 6
MESTA Conference
8:00am-3:35pm
District 287 Conference Center
1820 North Xenium Lane, Plymouth

Minnesota Earth Science
Teachers' Association (MESTA)
3149 Alexander Lane
Mound, MN 55364

HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS

These hotels are near the conference facility. Call for prices and to make your own arrangements:
Comfort Inn Plymouth: (763) 559-1222
Crown Plaza Minneapolis: (763) 559-6600
Ramada Plymouth: (763) 553-1600

CLOCK HOURS AND TDE

Re-licensure clock hours are available at this conference. Consider connecting your professional development/TDE goals to teaching techniques and knowledge gained at this conference.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Conference event information:
Stephanie Erickson (eric0453@umn.edu)

Conference registration questions:
Jess Strom (jessica.strom@orono.k12.mn.us)

Minnesota Earth Science Teachers' Association
3149 Alexander Lane
Mound, MN 55364

http://www.mnearthscience.org/

REGISTRATION FORM

Registration is non–refundable.
Please print.

NAME:_____

EMAIL:_____

SCHOOL: _____

PREFERRED ADDRESS:

_____

CITY, STATE, ZIP

_____

PREFERRED PHONE: _____

REGISTRATION OPTIONS

- ☐ $130 Basic Conference Registration
- ☐ $80 Pre-service Teacher /Full Time College Student

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION INCLUDING MnSTA MEMBERSHIP

- ☐ $155 Basic Conference Registration
- ☐ $145 First Year Teacher / Retired Teacher
- ☐ $90 Pre-service Teacher / Full Time College Student

COMPLIMENTARY BREAKFAST AND LUNCH

Note any dietary restrictions below. We will try to accommodate, if possible.

_____

_____

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OPTIONAL THURSDAY EVENING EVENT

- ☐ Add $10 if you will be attending this event.

TOTAL AMOUNT _____

To register by mail with a check (payable to MESTA send this form to
Jess Strom at **3149 Alexander Lane, Mound, MN 55364.**

To register online with a credit card, go to
http://www.mnearthscience.org/

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Danielle Hefferan, Regional MN Education Coordinator, Climate Generation

Climate Change Education: Educators as Critical Changemakers

As Regional Education Coordinator at Climate Generation, Danielle partners with Minnesota communities to bring climate change and climate justice education to life. Through the **Teach Climate Network**—a vibrant community of 7,000+ educators—she helps create engaging, standards-aligned resources used nationwide. Climate Generation believes education is a powerful, often overlooked climate solution, and they empower teachers to be informed, impactful changemakers.

Danielle is an experienced educator and facilitator with a Master's in Teaching and a diverse background as a naturalist, farmer, civil servant, and program director. She brings a systems-thinking lens to environmental learning and is passionate about connecting people with the places they live and learn.

THURSDAY EVENING EVENT

Tour the Minnesota History Center

History and science are deeply connected, and Minnesota's story is shaped by both its rich natural resources and its wild weather. On our visit, we'll explore how Earth science comes to life through two exciting exhibits. In **"Then, Now, Wow,"** you'll step into the shoes of early miners and even try blasting for ore! In **"Weather Permitting,"** we'll relive some of Minnesota's most dramatic weather events. These hands-on experiences will show how science and history are all around us and bring science to life.

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Locally Grounded, Globally Relevant: Earth Science for Grades 6–12

Stephanie Erickson, University of Minnesota, Alan Dewey, Pine Island Schools, Anna Karsten, Lake City Schools Barbara Wendt, Marshall Schools

Through the lens of Minnesota's unique groundwater systems, this session showcases a year-long Earth science curriculum designed by a team of educators. The curriculum includes eight NGSS-aligned units for middle or high school, each featuring summary charts, driving question boards, and coherent 3D storylines. Rooted in local phenomena, the units emphasize hands-on investigations and student engagement, making Earth science relevant, inquiry-driven, and connected to students' own environment.

Modeling Core Samples

Kat Cantner, University of Minnesota

Core samples give direct insight into Earth's underground layers. In this workshop, participants will explore hands-on activities using everyday materials—like Zorbitrol (sodium polyacrylate)—to model subsurface layers and teach concepts such as stratigraphy, dating, human impacts, paleoclimate, and earthquakes. Lessons are adaptable across grade levels and aligned with science standards, with ready-to-use classroom resources provided.

Protecting Drinking Water and Reducing Nitrogen

Caitlin Meyer, Water Resources Supervisor, Olmsted County

Groundwater in southeastern Minnesota is essential for drinking water, agriculture, and industry, but it faces contamination from land management practices in sensitive areas. This session examines the issues posed by nitrate contamination and offers practical, research-based solutions to reduce nitrogen inputs. Discover how implementing cover crops, small grains, and alternative cropping systems can enhance soil health, minimize nitrate leaching, and help protect this critical water resource.

Observing the Earth's Orbit: Hands-On Activities for Astronomy Students

Sylke Boyd, Assoc. Professor of Physics, University of Minnesota Morris

Bring Earth and Space Science standards to life with engaging, hands-on astronomy activities that help students explore the sun's motion and its connection to timekeeping. Participants will build shadow trackers, solar calendars, and simple timers—tools inspired by ancient civilizations to observe and model seasonal patterns. These ready-to-implement lessons support core science practices like developing and using models, identifying patterns, and constructing explanations, making them ideal for middle and high school classrooms.