

URI SMILE (Science and Math Investigative Learning Experiences) Program educational outreach

The SMILE Program runs a large elementary, middle, and high school STEM outreach program that serves schools with a high proportion of students from underrepresented minority groups. We have collaborated with Principal Investigators (PIs) on multiple successful NSF, NIH, NOAA, and USDA grants. Prior to grant submission, SMILE staff meet with interested PIs to identify areas of interest and help craft the 'outreach/broader impacts' portion of the proposal. Once funded, SMILE staff develop grant-related curriculum for the elementary, middle and /or high school, order supplies for hands-on student activities and teacher workshops, teach the SMILE club leaders the STEM concepts, and supervise the in-school implementation of curricula. SMILE staff also plan grant-funded field trips, including transportation, tours, etc. Grant-funded activities are featured in our newsletters and blogs; the PI also receives detailed yearly and end-of grant reports on grant-funded outreach and the number of students participating in these activities. Importantly, the PI determines the degree to which they participate directly in the outreach efforts: successful grants have run the gamut from minimal to daily involvement.

SMILE can provide interested PIs a grant template (drawn from an active million-dollar NSF grant) for the sections on Broader Impacts, educational outreach, assessment/evaluation of effectiveness, budget and budget justification.

ABOUT SMILE

The SMILE Program is now in its 29th year and has grown from a single 20-student club into 23 clubs that serve 490 students in six Rhode Island school districts (Central Falls, Newport, South Kingstown, Westerly, West Warwick, and Woonsocket).

The mission of SMILE is to increase the number of students from underrepresented groups who graduate high school well prepared and motivated to enter higher education and pursue STEM careers. SMILE starts in elementary school (4th – 5th grades) and continues to support students' pursuit of higher education and STEM career opportunities through the impressionable middle school years and into high school. The SMILE Program includes features designed to introduce and integrate university and real-world experiences, mentoring, inquiry-based STEM activities in a club setting, science-identity-supportive peer culture development, early college and career awareness, and annual environmental and engineering challenge events.

The SMILE Program's goals are to foster academic achievement, increase STEM interest and awareness, and promote students to pursue STEM careers and college among historically underrepresented and other educationally underserved students in Rhode Island. SMILE works on the premise that a child's interest in STEM should start early and be carefully nurtured.

For more information visit the URI SMILE website:
<https://web.uri.edu/smile/>