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Workshop Applies Classroom Lessons to Energy Careers

Day-long teacher training program helps develop practical life lessons

TOLEDO, OH – Gathered at the University of Toledo, forty teachers from across the state collaborated to better connect classroom lesson plans to real-world career opportunities. The day-long seminar, hosted by the Ohio Oil & Gas Energy Education Program and the Oregon Clean Energy Center, focused on practical, innovative approaches to science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

Alongside Ohio's expanding energy, technology and advanced manufacturing industries is a need for a skilled, talented workforce with a fundamental STEM-based skillset. This program helps science teachers better establish the important relationship between STEM education and the energy production, transportation and generation industries.

"It is our hope that the teachers leave here today with ideas of how to easily incorporate energy-related lessons and activities into their classrooms," said Rhonda Reda, OOGEEP executive director. "Every stage of energy production – from drilling to petrochemical processing to natural gas generated electricity – is based on basic science principles. It is important that students have an understanding of how the natural gas lifecycle works, especially in a state like Ohio where our energy industry has such a strong history and presence."

Educators from 13 counties and 17 schools participated in the program that developed lesson plans and explored hands-on science labs focusing on a variety of different aspects of energy production.

Following the morning classroom learning session, the teachers took a field trip to the Oregon Clean Energy Center – Ohio's most efficient, clean-burning natural gas power plant. The plant, which opened last year, features modern combined-cycle generation technology that can power 700,000 homes. During the tour, teachers learned about each employee's role and how the plant functions, allowing them to connect classroom lessons to potential careers for their students.

"Seven out of every ten homes use natural gas as their primary energy source, and the Oregon Clean Energy Center has the ability to produce low-cost electricity for more than 700,000 homes," said Peter Rigney, Projects General Manager at the plant. "Knowing how our energy is created, and the ways that using natural gas as an energy resource is helping our environment is incredibly important for our students as Ohio is emerging as a national leader in clean energy production. We're pleased to partner with the Ohio Oil & Gas Energy Education Program on this workshop and to host this group of teachers."

Teachers left the workshop with classroom resource materials, supplies, and lesson plans that they can take back to their classrooms to integrate into their required curriculum.

"We are really learning about the career connections that are happening within the industry. A lot of trades that are available for the students." said McComb teacher Heather Bryan. "As a teacher, I'm learning about the science behind it and better able to translate it to my students so they can use it to go further as they make future plans of where they want to go."

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The Ohio Oil and Gas Energy Education Program (OOGEEP) is a non-profit industry funded education program established to promote a positive public awareness of Ohio's oil and gas drilling and producing industry. OOGEEP communicates information about the oil and natural gas industry, environmental and safety issues, and the vital contribution of oil and gas to Ohio's economy. For news and updates, follow the program on Twitter (@OOGEEP) and Facebook.

The Oregon Clean Energy Center, completed in 2017, is the first privately funded, state-of-the-art combined cycle natural gas power plant in the state of Ohio that is capable of producing 960 megawatts of clean, reliable energy for more than 700,000 homes.