

# NASA Explorer Schools Sterling Elementary and Nikiski Elementary Partnership 2004-2007



This was one of the most ambitious NASA education projects in recent memory, creating strong partnerships with middle and elementary schools all over the US and providing their staff with resources, professional development opportunities and access to NASA staff at a very high level. Allan was teaching 6th grade at the time and had built some strong connections with NASA staff through his astronaut finalist journey, which made his school and another in his district the prime candidates for Alaska.

As part of the partnership our teachers were offered some fantastic professional development opportunities every summer including:

- LEGO Robotics training at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory
- Work with the Flight and Astrobiology Teams at Ames Research Center
- Opportunities for Astronaut visits (Scott Kelly visited out school in 2006)
- Special access to educational programs like ISS Earthkam and Science through the Arts
- Special Access to programming at the Challenger Learning Center of Alaska
- Opportunities to participate in Zero Gravity flights (I flew twice in 2007)
- Access to a special team of NASA Educational Specialists to support classroom projects (every grade K-6 did something with them every year for 3 years)

With a change in NASA administration in 2008, as well as the economic downturn that cut severely into NASA education funding the program came to close. I still consider it to be the best professional development I've ever taken in part in during my 3 decades of teaching and hopefully someday it will be recreated in some new fashion. It did get some recognition - the NASA Explorer Schools program was chosen as one of the "Top Innovations in American Government Awards for 2006" by the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.