

Gable Middle teacher chosen for NASA research project

By [Zach Fox](#)

zach.fox@shj.com

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Through a special program with NASA, Garrison Hall will be able to study the birth of stars in the solar system and use that knowledge to teach students in the Upstate.

Hall, the Gateway to Technology teacher at L.E. Gable Middle School in Spartanburg District 6, was one of eight teachers from across the country chosen for NASA's Infrared Processing and Analysis Center (IPAC) Teacher Archive Research Program. The program, known as NITARP, is designed to let teachers research the field of astronomy to improve the way science is taught in the classroom.



ALEX C. HICKS JR./alex.hicks@shj.com

Dillon Bradley, 11, left, helps Garrison Hall with a project to determine the size of the moon and the earth. On Tuesday, Hall visited Anderson Mill Elementary School to perform several science demonstrations. Hall, a teacher at L.E. Gable Middle School, is one of six teachers from across the country chosen for a research work project with NASA.

Hall, who also teaches programs at Roper Mountain Science Center in Greenville, said the teachers will study a nebula — a space cloud of dust and gases where stars are born — to better understand the life cycle of stars.

"It's a serious, authentic research project," he said, previewing the work he'll do over a 13-month period. "We're adding to the field of knowledge, which makes you feel important."

Hall's scientific prowess was on full display at Anderson Mill Elementary School's family science night on Tuesday. Hall walked a theater full of students and parents through scientific demonstrations after giving a brief overview of the project he'll be working on with NASA.

He also showed the group the size of the solar system with dots on a rope, each illustrating the location of a planet. Near the end of the rope was Pluto, now a former planet, and at the far end of the rope from the sun was the NASA spacecraft Voyager.

Voyager was launched in 1977 and has now traveled farther than anyone or anything in history.

Hall said the enthusiasm students showed during his demonstrations is nothing new. During his 30-year teaching career, he said students are always interested in science when you show them what it can do instead of simply telling them.

"It gives them a thrill," he said. "There's a shared excitement you can feel when you show them something new."

The most popular event of the demonstration was when Hall let students, who wore safety goggles for protection, hold up a lit candle to balloons. Some of the balloons were filled with helium and when touched by the flame, popped without much fanfare. The others were filled with hydrogen, and they popped with a loud, crowd-

pleasing boom and burst of flames.

Hall said that if you can get students interested in science, you can have them hooked for life. He said he thinks his time working with NASA will further engage students and show them what is possible when you commit to learning about science.

“They're usually willing to jump aboard with stuff like that,” he said. “It builds it up in their eyes to say they got to do something associated with NASA.”

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