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### **Heights Middle School Teacher Returns from Mission on NOAA Ship *Walton Smith***

Nathan Pierantoni, a middle school science teacher at Heights Middle School in Farmington, New Mexico, returned Saturday from almost a week aboard R/V *Walton Smith*. NOAA selected Pierantoni to join scientists aboard the R/V *Walton Smith* as part of its Teacher at Sea program to bridge science and education.

“NOAA’s Teacher at Sea program immerses teachers in hands-on research experiences that give them clearer insight into our ocean planet, a greater understanding of maritime work and studies, and increased knowledge of environmental literacy,” said Jennifer Hammond, the program’s director. “Participating in real-world research allows teachers to gain experience actually doing science, which makes a significant impact when they bring back their knowledge to their classrooms, teaching students how the oceans affect their lives.”

Pierantoni boarded the *Walton Smith* in Miami, Florida and left port on Monday, April 4. Pierantoni spent the next six days assisting scientists with the ship’s oceanographic research and posting his own logs about important research of the day, life at sea, interviews with scientists, and photos. Pierantoni’s logs are [posted online](#) and accessible through NOAA’s Teacher at Sea website at <http://teacheratsea.noaa.gov>.

“I was thrilled to be part of the NOAA Teacher at Sea program because this opportunity allowed me to bring real-world ocean science into my classroom. Farmington Municipal Schools’ one-to-one laptop initiative provided a perfect opportunity for students throughout the district to witness, and on some level, participate in the ongoing cleanup and research related to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill,” Pierantoni said. “This type of first-hand experience is vital to getting students excited about science.”

Now in its 21<sup>st</sup> year, the program has provided over 600 teachers the opportunity to gain first-hand experience participating in science at sea. This year NOAA received more than 250 applications. They selected 33 individuals to participate in cruises. According to Hammond, educators can enrich their curricula with a depth of understanding made possible by living and working side-by-side, day and night, with those who contribute to the world’s body of scientific knowledge.

NOAA’s mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth’s environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Find us on [Facebook](#).