

## Shell Science Teaching Award - Tips for Teachers Applying

### 1. Write for a reviewer, not a reader

Reviewers are scanning many applications quickly. Use clear structure, concise paragraphs, and strong topic sentences. Avoid general claims without evidence. Every major statement should be supported by something observable from your classroom practice.

### 2. Make standards alignment explicit and appropriate to your state

Not all states use Next Generation Science Standards, and applicants are **not expected to force NGSS alignment** if their state uses a different framework. What matters is clear alignment to a **recognized set of science standards**.

You may reference:

- State science standards (most common and fully acceptable)
- District curriculum frameworks
- National Science Education Standards developed by the National Research Council Science Education Framework
- AAAS Benchmarks for Science Literacy

#### What reviewers want to see:

- Clear naming of your standards (don't leave them vague)
- Evidence that instruction is intentionally designed around them
- Alignment shown through student tasks, not just statements

#### Strong example:

“Students construct explanations of energy transfer in ecosystems using field data and simulations aligned to state standards on systems and interactions.”

#### Weaker example:

“My instruction aligns with science standards.”

### 3. Prioritize student thinking over teacher activity

Avoid focusing too heavily on what you do. Instead, emphasize what students are doing and thinking.

Stronger emphasis includes:

- Students analyzing data
- Developing models and explanations
- Engaging in argument from evidence
- Revising ideas based on investigation

#### **4. Use specific, authentic classroom examples**

Avoid vague phrases like “hands-on learning” or “engaging labs.”

Instead, describe:

- One clear unit or investigation
- The phenomenon or problem
- Student actions and thinking
- Evidence students generated
- How understanding developed over time

Specificity builds credibility quickly.

#### **5. Show impact, not intention**

Strong applications demonstrate results, not just goals.

Examples of impact:

- Student growth in scientific reasoning or argumentation
- Increased engagement from diverse learners
- Student-designed models, solutions, or presentations
- Community presentations or real-world application of learning

Qualitative evidence is acceptable if clearly described.

#### **6. Embed equity throughout your application**

Equity should not be an add-on section. It should appear throughout your instructional method and philosophy.

Address:

- Access for multilingual learners
- Supports for students with disabilities
- Differentiation that maintains rigor
- Representation of student identities in science learning

#### **7. Connect science learning to real-world relevance**

Strong applications consistently connect science to:

- Local environmental or community issues
- Engineering design challenges

- Student-driven questions
- Authentic problems with real audiences or outcomes

### **8. Frame safety as a system, not a checklist**

In the safety section, avoid only listing rules. Instead, describe a structured system:

- Student training and certification
- Gradual release of responsibility
- Routine reinforcement of safe practices
- Compliance with district and lab safety standards

Safety should be shown as part of classroom culture.

### **9. Strengthen letters of support with specific evidence**

Strong letters:

- Include concrete examples, not general praise
- Come from multiple perspectives (admin, colleague, student, partner)
- Demonstrate impact beyond your classroom
- Highlight leadership, innovation, and influence

### **10. Ensure consistency across all sections**

Your application should be internally aligned.

Check that:

- Your philosophy matches your instructional examples
- Your instructional method matches your schedule
- Your claims are reinforced by letters of support
- Your standards alignment matches actual classroom tasks

### **11. Keep tone professional, clear, and grounded**

Avoid overly emotional or inflated language. Strong applications are:

- Confident without exaggeration
- Evidence-based
- Reflective but concise

## **12. Think like a reviewer, not an applicant**

Before submitting, ask:

- Can someone visualize what happens in my classroom?
- Is every major claim supported with evidence?
- Does this show student learning, not just teaching activity?
- Is alignment to standards clear and accurate for my state or system?