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Dear School Board/School Authority:

It is with great pleasure and enthusiasm that the Botanical Society of America (BSA) is writing to seek your support for the participation of a local teacher's class in the BSA-led PlantingScience program. Prior to involvement of secondary students, written approval from the school board or comparable authority is required. In this letter we describe how secondary school teachers, students, and plant scientists work together in this online inquiry-based science outreach program.

PlantingScience is a collaboration among the Botanical Society of America, other plant organizations, science educators, and science education researchers. Our goals are to improve understanding of the process and nature of science, while fostering an awareness of, and appreciation for, plants. Online mentoring of student teams as they conduct science inquiry projects in their classrooms lies at the heart of this program. Since the pilot program in 2005, approximately 14,000 students from 38 states have worked with online scientist mentors. The National Science Foundation recently funded our innovative approach to supporting science literacy and building 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills.

Participation in the online science inquiry community is free. The PlantingScience program provides starter materials (seeds in the case of the germination investigation), hard copies of investigation guides, consent forms, access to the secure website ([www.plantingscience.org](http://www.plantingscience.org)), and connections to scientist mentors and registered schools.

The website serves as the communication platform where student teams post their research and discuss their project findings with other teams and their scientist mentors. Rest assured that we adhere to COPPA guidelines and maintain stringent security. Only approved registered scientists, teachers, and their students are able to comment on the website.

All written materials are currently accessible to school authorities and parents on the website. The written materials include seed germination and photosynthesis inquiry guides, inquiry teaching guides, student resources for science investigations (such as how to think and work like a scientist, how to keep a research journal), and tips for mentors and teachers to get the most of the program. We are also happy to send hard copies of any these documents to you for review.

The BSA commends the efforts of innovative teachers who seek to provide students with authentic science experiences. And we hope to support this as we work to provide many more students with an opportunity to experience inquiry science in collaboration with practicing scientists and students from other cities and states.

Should you require additional information in order to approve participation in PlantingScience, please do not hesitate to contact us. To grant approval, please sign and return the following page. Thank you for your consideration.

Catrina Adams, Education Director, Botanical Society of America 314-558-2307

TO:  
Catrina Adams  
Education Director  
Botanical Society of America  
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St. Louis, MO 63110

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As a school authority, I/we approve the participation of a teacher and students in the Botanical Society of America-led PlantingScience program. I am aware that through student research projects, students will post information to the project website and communicate online with leading plant scientists who will serve as mentors offering feedback and encouragement, and that there will also be students from around the country doing similar projects who will be a part of this scientific learning community. I understand that students will receive consent forms, which must be signed by parents of children under 13 years of age, prior to online posting and individual students in class may opt out of the online component while participating in the hands-on plant investigations.

Please let this letter serve as our written approval for the participation of:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher's Full Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
School Name

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
(signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Full Name of School Authority

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title of School Authority

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone