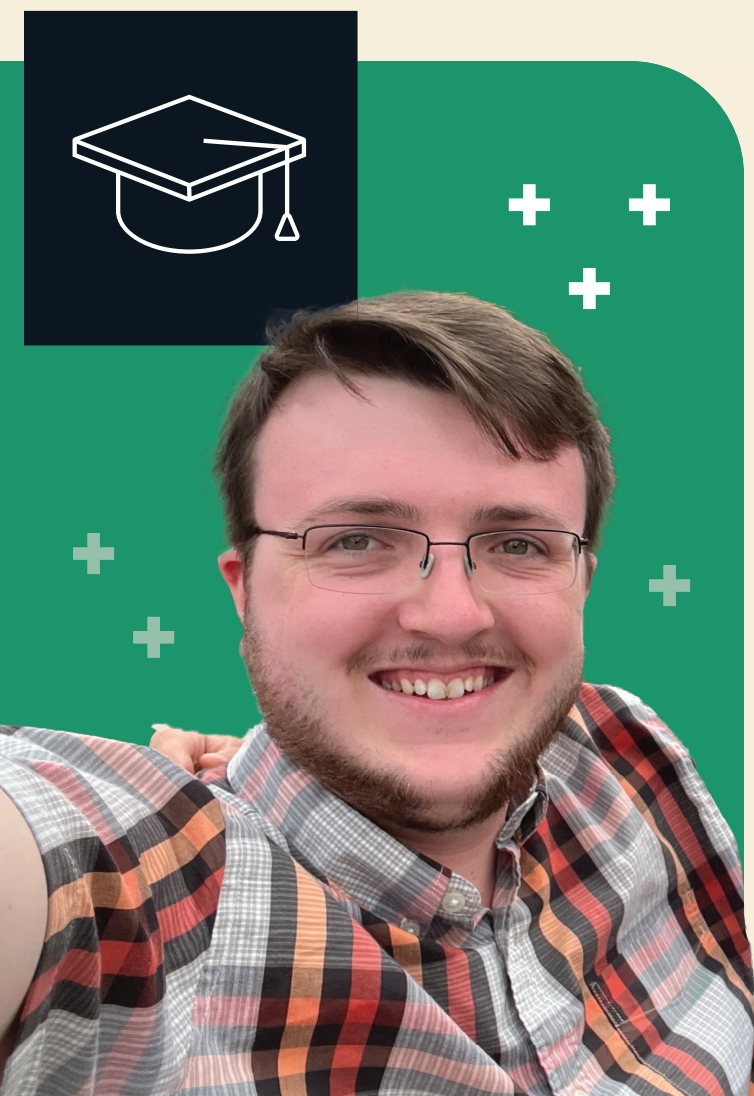


Jack Lambert teaches high school physics

High school physics teacher, Utah

BS, physics, Washington State University, 2019
MA, teaching, Westminster University, 2021



(Photo courtesy of Jack Lambert.)

Why did you go into teaching?

I intended to get a PhD and stay in research. But while I was getting my bachelor's degree, I got involved in outreach through the physics and astronomy club. I found value in thinking of ways to share the physics I love. By the end of college, I realized that I could continue to do that if I went into education. And I realized I was good at it.

How did you move into teaching?

I found an accelerated master's program in education, three semesters long.

I was lucky: One of the places I did observations and student teaching was at Utah's top public high school. The school's initial response to the program's inquiry about taking on a student teacher in physics was, "No, but can we hire him?" I did end up student teaching there and then got hired.

What do you like about teaching?

I teach AP physics. I also teach IB [International Baccalaureate] physics, where I cover things in a different way. I love that.

It's rewarding to see it click with people that math can be used to explore the universe, and how beautiful and incredible that is.

The less fun parts are the grading, parents, emails, and students' stress about exam scores.

How do you use physics in your job?

Most high school physics teachers have backgrounds in math, chemistry, or geology, not physics. I'm not sure I would have the same enthusiasm if I hadn't studied physics. And I think that helps kids, who often have the perception that physics is difficult and scary.

What new skills did you need?

I had to learn classroom management and how to have the right presence. I also had to rethink how to present material. My master's helped with that. So did conversations with the high school's instructional coach.

Do you earn a living wage?

It's been pretty good for me. I make about \$70 000 a year, plus \$5000 from Utah's Teacher Salary Supplement Program. And there are opportunities through the school to earn more. Last year, I swapped a prep period to take on an extra class. That gave me a 12% bump.