In 2008, ReSET board member John Newby proposed forming a partnership between ReSET and the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office (USPTO). After Newby, a patent attorney, made initial contact with the agency, the baton was handed off to PTO Society Education Co-Chairs Christyann Pulliam and Yara Green, who began formal development of a partnership program. Says Pulliam: "Once my co-chair and I heard about ReSET, we wanted the PTO Society to support the organization. So many of us at the PTO benefited from exposure to science at a young age. Those experiences led us to our science and engineering degrees. When you are able to show young people that science and math are fun, that they can do them, and that there is a career that will let them continue in the field, you can really positively impact that child."

The first school that expressed an interest in the new partner program was Whittier Education Campus, a DCPS STEM Catalyst School. Whittier Principal, Nicole Clifton, along with the school’s STEM Coordinator, Cindy Hamilton, were especially excited to work with ReSET/PTOS because of their willingness to do experiments that aligned with Whittier's science curriculum: "We liked their approach of looking to how could they support our instructional program. Our students have benefited because they have the opportunity to apply what they’ve learned in science by completing a hands-on activity."

Two other groups at PTO—The Asian Pacific American Network (APANET) and the Society for Hispanic Engineers (SHPE), developed a second partnership with Langdon Education Campus in northeast DC, and began the programs with fifth grades there in spring 2011.

PTO volunteers are split into two or three teams that work with different classes simultaneously. It is an innovative approach that accommodates working volunteers well. If one volunteer has a scheduling conflict, the rest of the team proceeds with the classroom session.

With more than 30 active volunteers, the alliance between ReSET and PTO offers exciting new possibilities for alternative ways to deliver and expand programming to interested institutions. ReSET’s role in the partnership is consistent with its other
volunteer programs. John Meagher, ReSET's Executive Director, explains: “We develop agreements with the
schools, organize meetings for volunteers, principals and teachers, assist with program guidelines, content and
scheduling, and analyze evaluation data from PTO programs. Unlike ReSET’s more traditional program, PTO covers
the cost of supplies, equipment, and field trips, which helps with our financial footing.”

Last term, Whittier students were engaged in experiments in fingerprinting, solar powered cars, and measuring
gravity. This term they will tackle water filtration, bridge building, and robotics. At Langdon, this term's APANET and
SHPE programs for third grades include slime (chemistry), rocket launch, and Play-Doh Light Emitting Diode
circuits. Volunteers are also helping teachers learn how to use their Lego Mindstorm kits, which contain software
and hardware to create small, customizable and programmable robots. “Students are excited about ALL of the
experiments that they complete with ReSET/PTO,” says Hamilton. “And because PTO Society volunteers are
individuals who have worked in STEM-related fields, this gives them the opportunity to ask questions of individuals
they would never have had the opportunity to interact with.”

PTO views its partnership with ReSET as part of its overall educational mission . . . it furthers awareness of the
agency and what it does by including descriptions of PTO in the experiments and by taking the students to PTO for
field trips. The program has received enthusiastic support from management, and Joyce Ward, PTO's Education
Coordinator, has been spreading the word about ReSET to other interested federal agencies, such as NASA.

Peter Mehravari, who started volunteering in 2011 and is now ReSET's point of contact at PTO Society, had been
looking for a way to give back, when he discovered ReSET at a DC science fair competition. “In my work we take a
more dry and academic approach to technology,” says Mehravari. “Volunteering in this program allows me to get
back to the joy I experienced as a kid doing hands-on science.”