Dark Skies, Bright Kids! - Year 9

DSBK is a volunteer-run outreach organization based out of the Department of Astronomy at the University of Virginia. Our core mission is to enhance elementary science education and literacy in Virginia through fun, hands-on activities that introduce basic Astronomy concepts.

We adapt and reassess our curriculum to best serve three flavors of outreach.

8-10 Week After-School Clubs

Goal: Meaningful relationships of scientists & underserved students around Charlottesville

Our approach:
- 1 topic/week ranging from the EM spectrum to galaxies
- ~5 volunteers per ~2 hr club of 12-20 students, mix of new/returning volunteers
- Intro → "Wiggle time" → 2 Activities → Journals

Takeaways:
- Adapt curriculum for students
- Additional support for issues scientists aren't trained for
- Incorporate volunteers' expertise

Astronomy Summer Camps

Goal: Adapt clubs into camps for underserved schools in VA

Our approach:
- 2 topics/day for 1 week
- Same ~5 volunteers for 12-20 students all week
- Expand lesson plans to be more hands-on, interactive

Takeaways:
- Significant coordination and prior planning
- Cooperation with hosting org
- Portable activities ideal for sharing/leaving with rural orgs

Community Star Party

Goal: Science-positive community of all ages, demographics

Our approach:
- Free event for 100's of attendees
- Local company collaborations to minimize cost, increase public access
- Local EPO groups collaborations for improved volunteer-to-attendee ratio

Takeaways:
- Approachable, easy-digested
- Informal interactions equally important
- Range of activity complexity for volunteers and attendees

Overall Takeaways:
- Don't be afraid to ask for support!
- Doing > Showing > Telling
- Adapt activities for students, volunteers, and learning environment

For more information, activity resources, and ways you can help find us on Facebook (Dark Skies Bright Kids) and at our website: faculty.virginia.edu/DSBK/