

A short report on the Outreach at Thuto-Kitso Comprehensive School (Fochville) on May 24, 2012.

Participants:

GYA members: Jauad El Kharraz (France/Morocco), Reza Afshari (Iran), Jeronimo Maze (Chile), Javier M. Moguerza (Spain), Rob Jenkins (Scotland) met at the the Sci-Bono discovery Centre in Johannesburg at early morning on May 24, 2012.

Place:

We took two cars to Fochville in the North West Province (<http://www.nwpg.gov.za/education/>) of South Africa, and we were received in Thuto-Kitso Comprehensive School (Fochville) by its director: Ms. Eunice Mabiletsa.

Activities:

After the presentations of the participants (GYA members) a briefing on the school was given by the director of the school; Ms. Eunice Mabiletsa, who also presented us a couple of professors charged by receiving us in their classes.

Each one of us (the 5 GYA members) prepared a presentation or a game before the day before. Each one of us was directed to a different class. Almost of us conducted by 3 class sessions as an average (personally I have been in 3 different classes).

The learners/students were 9-14 years old, wearing the school uniform.

The learners were able to interact on topics ranging from soft matter, DNA, polymers, environment and water, climate change, remote sensing, mathematics, physics, chemistry, pollution, renewable energies, to astrophysics and space.

Personally, I conducted the first session in a mathematics class, and waited the professor to give his learners an exercise on mathematical equations (derivatives and limits), then I tried to observe and check the responses and the way all the students were following to solve out the questions, and tried to explain and help some of them. Then, I got the opportunity to talk about the importance of saving water and save our environment from pollution; I used a power point support (see the file enclosed with this report). They were very keen to listen quietly and they gave me a lot of questions, especially as I explained to them that other kids in countries such as Jordan or Somalia struggle to get a safe drinking water, in the first case because of water scarcity and in the second case because of drought, water scarcity, climate change and conflicts/wars, etc.

I moved then to another class where the learners were younger, and I talked about science in general and its importance in achieving all what we have now in hands and they asked me a lot of questions, among others: when the world will end? How big is the planet, what kind of studies I carried out, what is the best science?! I told them it does not really matter which science you decide to enter inside straight out of school, it all rocks and useful for our society and the whole humanity, even if I mentioned the quote of the famous physician Sir Ernest Rutherford (as I am also a physician) when he said: "All science is either physics or stamp collecting", but clarified that any scientists will defend the most his own science, while all sciences remain very important.

After a lunch break in the professors' room, I visited another class where the professor was preparing a presentation on a chemistry experience. He gave me the floor at the beginning, and I gave them a long speech about my career, the studies I carried out, the

importance of choosing a career and a science we love, because science is a passion. They were very enthusiastic, and asked me a lot of questions, such as: how can we become scientists? What is the extent of using solar energy instead of oil!!! What are the space black holes? One student told me he has not good marks in physics and wanted to become an IT engineer, so I explained to her the importance to doing well in mathematics and physics which are the basis, and then explained to her that there is the part of IT related to software and the one related to hardware, and encouraged her to keep up working hard to achieve her dream. Many others told me what they want to become in the future, and tried at the end to take with me photos with their own mobiles, etc.

We found the learners very enthusiastic, attentive, participative, and very excited to learn. The professors told them before our arrival that they were going to meet scientists that usually they see only in TV and books, so in part that was a reason for their excitement.

I am enclosing with this report some photos below (see attached files for full resolution).

Definitely, it was an exciting journey, we had a lot of fun, and it was fascinating to meet all those young learners.

I believe we could contribute somehow to raising awareness of the benefits and contribution of science and technology to the society and the whole humanity for those young learners, and those next scientific and economic actors in South Africa!

Author:

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