

SES06-2006-000171

Abstract for an Invited Paper
for the SES06 Meeting of
the American Physical Society

Seeds and Sparks: Cultivating Children's Interest in Physics through Public Outreach

JESSICA CLARK, American Physical Society

The National Academies' "Rising above the Gathering Storm"¹ report names the improvement of K-12 science and mathematics education as its highest priority recommendation. This recommendation includes enlarging the pipeline of students preparing to study STEM² subjects at university by increasing the number of students who take (and pass) advanced high school level science courses. To this end, the American Physical Society's Public Outreach department offers PhysicsQuest, a free program designed to engage middle school science students in a learning adventure. The core idea of the program is to provide a fun and exciting way for students to encounter physics, thereby eliminating some of the fear often associated with the subject and making them more likely to take high school physics courses. In the end, the students do learn some physics, but, more importantly, they have a fun experience with physics. This talk further describes the PhysicsQuest program, including feedback and results from the 2005 project, and also gives an overview of other K-12 programs offered by APS Public Outreach.

¹The report can be read online at <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/11463.html#toc>.

²Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics