

# AAAS NEWS & NOTES

edited by S. L. BYRAND

## Public Science Day In, Day Out

Thousands of students from Philadelphia have been finding out firsthand what it means to be a scientist in their city. Through a special program that has extended AAAS's annual Public Science Day over several months, kindergartners through 8th-graders have been investigating such topics as the physics of playgrounds and the limits on the urban ecosystem.

One 7th-grade science teacher at Philadelphia's Levering School related how the hands-on experience has strengthened his students' confidence and made them more receptive to studying science. "We have become a team, taking field trips through the neighborhood," said Norman Cooper, who has been a teacher for 10 years. "The kids are learning about the science that is around them every day. I'm learning that they know more than I thought they did—and, even better than that, they are finding out that they understand more than they thought."

One of their projects included examining microorganisms in water samples they collected from a pond at the Schuylkill Valley Nature Center. The students recorded their observations and sketched the different organisms.

"Then we went to the textbook to compare our results, to see how far off we were," said Cooper. The students were able to identify most of their discoveries, including amoebas and paramecia.

All grades at Levering have been participating in various science projects, and because that school is also celebrating its 250th anniversary this year, elements of history have been incorporated. For instance, younger students experimented with colonial kitchen chemistry. Levering's music teacher Lorraine Fielding is planning to teach the science of sound by reconstructing Benjamin Franklin's Armonica, which incorporates different-sized glass bowls to create a series of tones.

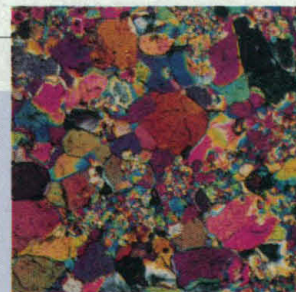
In addition to Levering, 21 other schools in Philadelphia—and one in Camden—are taking part in the extended Public Science "Day." Their projects revolve around themes found in James Trefil's book *A Scientist in the City*. A physics professor at George Mason University now on sabbatical, Trefil is slated to begin his term on the AAAS Committee of Public Understanding of Science and Technology at the 1998 AAAS Annual Meeting.

For the past 9 years, AAAS has kicked off its migratory annual meetings with a Public Science Day to engage local students in exciting science activities. "In many of the cities, Public Science Day has either become a citywide project or has been continued by individual venues," said Judy Kass of AAAS's Education and Human Resources Programs. For instance, in New Orleans, Public Science Day resulted in an annual tradition in the 8 years since the AAAS Meeting there.

For the 1998 meeting, which also launches AAAS's 150th year, the Association collaborated with The Franklin Institute to broaden the scope of Public Science Day. Sponsorship came from the Unisys Corporation. Said Kass, "Unisys provided the resources and the guidance that enabled us to expand the program."

The extended Public Science Day is being bolstered by another Unisys-funded program, the Science Learning Network (SLN). The network electronically links science museums in six cities with a local school, including The Franklin Institute and Levering School. Because of the network, the Public Science Day program has extended not only its duration but its reach, with other members of the SLN signing on. For instance, the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry has partnered with the Buckman School on a range of inquiry projects related to Public Science Day. In addition, the SLN has provided an interactive Internet site where students and teachers participating in Public Science Day activities can report their progress (see [www.sln.org](http://www.sln.org)).

On 12 February, the first day of the AAAS Meeting, 11,000 youths from the participating schools will split into groups, either touring a science facility or attending special events at the Philadelphia Convention Center. On the agenda are trips to The Franklin Institute, the Philadelphia Zoo, the Academy of Natural Sciences, and the New Jersey



### Golden Center, Closeup

To help commemorate the Association's inauguration 150 years ago, AAAS has produced a poster. It depicts a photomicrograph of the jet-mist granite that overlays the exterior of AAAS's William T. Golden Center for Science & Technology. Michael W. Davidson of Florida State University provided the image. The limited-edition poster will be sold for \$12 at the AAAS Annual Meeting and is also available by calling 202-326-6408.

Aquarium. The Franklin Institute will also provide students with an opportunity to meet via satellite with students from two schools in London, with the goal of establishing more permanent cyberlinks between them. At the AAAS Meeting, The Franklin Institute and other science institutes will provide traveling science shows, and each school will showcase their understanding of what it means to do science in the city. "Their presentations will be a celebration rather than a culmination of their activities," said Stephen H. Baumann, director of Educational Technology Programs at The Franklin Institute. "Instead of ending the public science program on that day, we want to provide an impetus for more activities throughout the year."

Norman Cooper reported that he will continue teaching science with the same techniques he has used for the extended Public Science Day program. "I have no choice in the matter," he said, smiling. No, it's not because he's being forced to adopt hands-on activities based on the students' community environment, explained Cooper: "I've found that this is the best way to go. It makes it easier for the children to learn and it makes me a better teacher."

## AAAS Fellow Nominations

The Association is now accepting nominations for its roster of Fellows—those AAAS members "whose efforts on behalf of the advancement of science or its applications are scientifically or socially distinguished." Each nomination must be sponsored by three current AAAS Fellows; at least one of the three sponsors must not be affiliated with the nominee's institution. Election is by the AAAS Council.

Nominations with complete documentation must be received by 1 June 1998. Nominations received after that date will be held for the following year. Nomination forms are available from Linda McDaniel, by mail at AAAS Executive Office, 1200 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20005, or by phone at 202-326-6635.

Questions regarding the Fellow status of specific members can be directed to Ms. McDaniel by e-mail at [lmcdaniel@aaas.org](mailto:lmcdaniel@aaas.org). The *Directory of AAAS Fellows* is available from the AAAS Distribution Center, P.O. Box 521, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701 (\$14.95 for members, plus \$4 for handling and shipping, prepaid).

## Constitutional Amendment Approved

The amendment to the AAAS Constitution Article VIII, Board of Directors, was approved by a vote of 16,836 to 1,876. The amendment allows for the appointment of two additional Board members.