

ATLANTIC SCIENCE LINKS ASSOCIATION



ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

2018/2019

ASLA ORGANIZES THE FIRST ANNUAL SCIENCE CONTEST FOR JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS IN NOVA SCOTIA

ASLA is pleased to inform science teachers about an exciting opportunity for their students to participate in the first annual ASLA Science Contest. The contest is for junior high students and features a total of 50 multiple choice questions covering Biology, Chemistry, Geology and Physics. All exam papers will be sent directly to the participating schools and students' response sheets should be sent back to ASLA for grading. It is free to participate and the top scoring three students in the province at each grade level will receive prizes and certificates of excellence. The first annual contest will be held on April 24th, 2019 at a time during the school day that works best for the teachers and students. ASLA can be contacted by email (sits@dal.ca) for further information.

ASLA HOSTS ITS SECOND ANNUAL CONFERENCE FOR SCIENCE TEACHERS

The Atlantic Science Links Association held its annual conference for science teachers at the Life Sciences Centre of Dalhousie University on August 28, 2018. Following on the success seen in last year's conference, the 2018 conference focused again on the Junior High science curriculum (grades 7-9). The conference used a variety of hands-on activities to introduce teachers to methods illustrating important concepts in a variety of science disciplines.

OUR SERVICES AND RESOURCES

Classroom presentations

Speakers for career fairs

Science fair judges

Science mentors

Workplace visits

Field trips

Science contests

Workshops for teachers





ASLA's conference: the opening ceremony

Thirty teachers from every area of Nova Scotia came to the university to take part in this exciting PD day. The conference opened with greetings to all the teachers from ASLA's president Arunika Gunawardena, who outlined ASLA's goal to provide Nova Scotia's young people with experiences and opportunities to explore the sciences. This was followed by a speech from the Acting Dean, Faculty of science, Sandra Walde. She started her speech by mentioning that we are celebrating Dalhousie University's 200th anniversary and commented on ASLA's continued volunteering presence in schools across Nova Scotia and the importance of it. She concluded by thanking the teachers for being so dedicated and passionate about science to give up a beautiful summer day to attend the conference.

Upon the completion of the opening ceremony, the teachers were split into two groups and interchanged labs throughout the day. The morning workshops consisted of a cell & molecular biology lab or an ecology & evolution lab. The cell & molecular biology lab was led by Arunika Gunawardena with her lab students, Department of Biology, Dalhousie, and consisted of teachers creating slides of leaves to view under a microscope. The second part of the lab involved a colorful DNA extraction from a variety of fruits and vegetables, including bananas and broccoli. The ecology and evolution lab, led by Elizabeth Welsh, Department of Biology, Dalhousie, focused on the shapes of mollusc shells and the evolutionary processes driving their formation. Many beautiful shells were observed during the process.

.After a lunch break the teachers were then treated to an information session on science fairs, presented by Adam Sarty, Associate Vice-President, Research and the Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, Saint Mary's University. The teachers then re-joined their groups to either begin with an earth science session or a greenhouse tour/ocean school information session. The earth science lab was led by Richard Cox, Department of Earth Science, Dalhousie, who demonstrated a variety of hands-on tests to identify minerals. Teachers were provided a variety of mineral samples and test kits to take back to their classroom. Meanwhile, the second group participated in an information session on "Ocean School": a learning program focused on creating interest in ocean science while educating students about the world's oceans presented by Boris Worm and Lucija Prelovec, Department of Biology. After that, they enjoyed a tour of Dalhousie University's beautiful greenhouse, guided by the ASLA's executive director Rajesh Rajaselvam, Department of Biology, Dalhousie. Teachers were shown a variety of beautiful plants including species brought from Sri Lanka!

The conference was closed with words from Paul Bentzen, Chair, Department of Biology, Dalhousie University, who thanked teachers for dedicating a day to science. He explained that ASLA's volunteer-based services, partnered with the science teacher's dedication to science in the classroom, would result in great contributions to the community and all of Nova Scotia. He concluded by again thanking the teachers for their passion and dedication and appreciating the volunteers who helped make such a successful day.

The Atlantic Science Links Association would like to thank NSERC, The Dalhousie University Faculty of Science, and Engineers Nova Scotia for the funding required to make this annual conference such a success. Dalhousie University's Biology and Earth Sciences Departments also donated valuable time, energy and space to help bring this conference together. Finally ASLA expresses gracious thanks to all the presenters and volunteers who contributed to make this conference a successful event.

TEACHERS' COMMENTS

I enjoyed the hands-on approach. It was fantastic to see and do the labs and have presenters available to show and help us with the process. A wonderful learning and sharing opportunity.

Very engaging and enjoyable. I enjoyed the hands-on labs.

Thank you so much for another year of fantastic conference topics.

This has been one of the most useful PD sessions that I have ever attended.

"The Sessions were inspiring and the speakers were excellent"

- Junior-high Teacher



Topics of the activities at the conference: A. cell & molecular biology, B. evolution, C. ocean school, D. earth sciences, E. science fair preparation, F. greenhouse visit

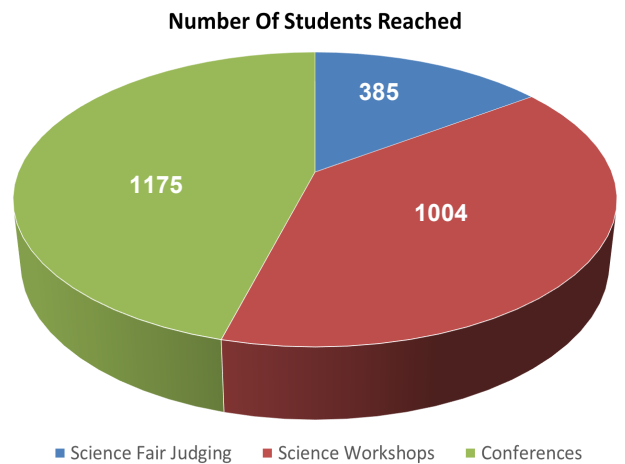


ASLA's conference: the closing ceremony

ACTIVITIES OF ASLA IN 2017/18

ASLA reaches 2600 students in 2017/18

SITS volunteers evaluated the science fair projects of nearly 385 students throughout the year. This year too; 20 new volunteers; mostly graduate students joined ASLA to do science workshops in schools. ASLA's scientists participated in 34 workshops or classroom presentations (14 biology, 4 space, 3 environment, 3 geology, 3 ecology, 3 oceans, 3 physics-engineering-chemistry and 1 women in science) including 2 in French. All the activities of ASLA (covering all the Regional Education Centres involving at least 30 schools) reached nearly 2600 students including 1004 and 1175 through science workshops and conferences respectively in 2017/18.



ASLA WELCOMES REQUESTS FROM SCHOOLS AND MORE VOLUNTEERS TO JOIN

SITS provides several services (listed on the front page), but our most popular by far is the Speakers' Bureau. Through the Speakers' Bureau, we assist schools in finding volunteer scientists and innovators to speak to students across the province. And the best part is, **it's completely free!** So you can bring exciting, hands-on science learning into your classroom at no charge. To get a Request Form or to find out more about the Speakers' Bureau go to <http://atlanticsciencelinks.dal.ca> or contact us by or email.

Strong volunteer commitment helped us to contact nearly two thousand and six hundred students in Nova Scotia. Science outreach initiatives at universities, federal and local government departments, research organizations and industries added some strength to our volunteer base as new groups linked with SITS to strengthen their ability to connect to P-12 teachers. With the increasing demand we still need more volunteers (especially in rural areas of the province) to reach many more students. To register yourself as a volunteer, please go to <http://atlanticsciencelinks.dal.ca> or contact the Executive Director at sits@dal.ca.

Contact Us

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We are on the web and Facebook
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OUR SPONSORS

ASLA continues to receive funds from NSERC's PromoScience grant, Dalhousie University and Engineers NS. We display our funders' logos here to thank them for their generous support and encouragement of science literacy and outreach in Nova Scotia. If you are interested in becoming one of our sponsors, please contact the Executive Director at sits@dal.ca.



"INVEST IN SCIENTIFIC LITERACY OF NS YOUTH"