

Diversified approach in astronomical education 9 : Junior Session in the semi-annual meeting of Astronomical Society of Japan

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The Astronomical Society of Japan (ASJ) holds a session called Junior Session in its semi-annual meeting. In this Junior Session, students of junior-high and high schools present their studies on astronomy. One of the purposes of this session is to promote their study of astronomy by having the opportunities to make presentations before professional researchers of astronomy. Another important purpose is to know the real astronomy and to feel the delight of astronomy (or science) by watching the forefront of astronomy and by talking with the researchers directly.

The idea of Junior Session was born among the executive committee of the semi-annual meeting of ASJ in the early 1999. After about one year discussions, the first Junior Session was held in the spring meeting of ASJ at Tokyo University in 2000. In this first session, there were 17 presentations and the number of participants was about 250. It was a very well attended. After that we had following Junior Sessions: 2nd (in the spring meeting of 2001, at Chiba University, 13 presentations, about 250 participants), 3rd (in the autumn meeting of 2001, at Iigure-Himeji, 7 presentations, about 150 participants), and 4th (in the spring meeting of 2002, at Ibaraki University, 23 presentations, about 215 participants). In addition to these, there will be 17 presentations in the 5th Junior Session, which will be held in the spring meeting of ASJ of 2003 at Tohoku University.

We hold Junior Session in the spring semi-annual meeting of ASJ, because it is during the spring vacation of schools in Japan. Therefore it is convenient for students to attend the session. However, in these several years the spring meetings were always held in Kanto area, so the 3rd Junior Session was specially held in the meeting of ASJ in autumn at Himeji city. Moreover students can choose oral presentation or poster presentation (or both), and if it is difficult for them to attend the session, it is allowed that only posters are presented. We also tried to broadcast the session over the internet and to open to public by using video-on-demand system from the 3rd session. And, of course, we have a homepage on the internet to show the programs and papers of Junior Sessions. By all of these attempts, we think that much more students and adults can attend and know Junior Session.

As for the subjects of presentations, more than half of presentations are related with the solar system, and especially there are many presentations related meteors. This is because meteors are suitable for students and because Leonids was very active in these years. However the subjects of presentations are rather broad. For example, there are presentations for the sun, stars, galaxies, observational equipments, light pollution, and etc. Most of the presentations are studied very enthusiastically and there level is rather high. From these presentations, we never feel that students are being away from science or even they dislike it.

Now it has passed more than four years since the idea of Junior Session first come out. We think it is widely accepted now. However there are several things that we must to do. Firstly we should make efforts to have much more students to Junior Session. At present, the number of students who attend Junior Session is limited. Secondly we should consider some ideas to make good communications between students and researchers.

Finally I appreciate to all the people who kindly collaborate for Junior Session with us.

(ref 1) M. Yoshikawa and Junior Session Committee : Junior Session in the Semi-annual Meeting of Astronomical Society of Japan, The Astronomical Herald, 2003 Vol.96 No.1, 21-27, in Japanese.

(ref 2) The homepage of Junior Session : form the homepage of Astronomical Society of Japan (<http://www.asj.or.jp/>), in Japanese.