

6. Concluding Remarks

Most large cities in France do not have a planetarium. This lack is a source of frustration to teachers who are aware of the great interest that their students have in astronomy. The inflatable planetariums are an answer to this need.

Their number has been increasing in these last three years, but as no resources are yet available from official agencies, encouraging this activity is a most difficult problem and necessitates the use of highly motivated volunteers. In any case, we feel that increased planetarium use must develop in France and in many other countries in the context of a comprehensive plan for the better teaching of science.

The Pre-College Planetarium

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The Bronx High School of Science is a public school in the New York City school system. It is a specialized school whose students are selected on the basis of a competitive exam. Our planetarium projector was installed last spring, so many of these suggested activities are still in development stage.

In the high school setting, the planetarium has a dual role as a teaching tool and as a motivational tool. The planetarium is used in the Astronomy and Astrophysics course, an advanced elective. This use permits a detailed study of the sky, which is otherwise difficult in New York City. Students who are familiar with thinking in two dimensions often have trouble making the transition to the three dimensions required in astronomy. The planetarium is an invaluable tool to develop students' spatial orientation. Further, the planetarium generates tremendous enthusiasm.

The planetarium will also find a place in the physics curriculum, maximizing its exposure to students since every student must take the physics course. Students will be given a planetarium experience when they study geocentric *versus* heliocentric models of the solar system and Kepler's laws of planetary motion. The planetarium will provide reinforcement, making the lessons memorable.

An additional benefit will be to generate interest in astronomy. The result will be a supply of students for the course as well as encouraging amateur interest.

We hope to develop additional programs, particularly some linking the humanities and astronomy. When English classes learn mythology, a visit to the planetarium would highlight the connection between culture and the sky. Planetarium observation would be appropriate for art-history classes. In social studies, a discussion of various calendars used by different human societies and their relation to celestial motion would provide enrichment.

We hope that these programs will maximize the use of the planetarium and increase students' awareness of astronomy.
