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P27 - How to Start Astronomy in School: A Collaborative Pathway from First Activities to Student Leaders and Community Outreach

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Many schools are interested in introducing astronomy education but often face challenges in starting a program due to limited teacher experience, insufficient resources, and uncertainty about how to create meaningful learning opportunities. As a result, astronomy activities may remain occasional events rather than developing into a continuous learning culture involving students and communities. This presentation shares a practical pathway for starting astronomy education in a school setting through collaboration, student leadership, and community engagement.

The initiative was developed at Rongkwang Anusorn School, Thailand, through a collaborative approach involving teacher development, administrative support, student participation, resources from the National Astronomical Research Institute of Thailand (NARIT), and partnerships with external organizations. After participating in introductory astronomy teacher training, the school began with small-scale activities using available resources, including star-map activities, telescope observations, celestial object observations, and astronomy media. These initial experiences gradually expanded through support from NARIT, including a 10-inch reflecting telescope and a mobile planetarium, leading to the establishment of the Astro R.A. Astronomy Club.

The program focused on transforming students from astronomy learners into astronomy leaders. Twenty student leaders were trained in astronomical knowledge, scientific process skills, science communication, activity design, and learning facilitation. They developed and delivered astronomy learning activities through stargazing stations, mobile planetarium sessions, solar observations, astronomy camps, and night-sky observations for students from different age groups and members of the public.

During one academic year, the program conducted seven major activities across six venues, reaching a cumulative attendance of 1,960. The activities extended astronomy learning beyond the classroom to other schools and local communities. Observations and reflections indicated that student leaders developed greater confidence in communication, teamwork, leadership, and activity management, while participants gained increased interest and positive attitudes toward astronomy through direct experiences.

The initiative received the Outstanding School Astronomy Activity Award and the Rising Star Award at the 7th Conference on Astronomy Activities in Schools (CAAS). This experience demonstrates that schools can begin astronomy education with small steps and gradually expand through collaboration, empowering students as facilitators, and connecting astronomy learning with wider communities.

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