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Elementary Science Olympiad News

Happy Fall and New School Year!

Many STEM educators and programs pivoted to virtual spaces for at-home learning during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. These tools are still useful, and can be modified to meet the needs of learners, no matter where they're learning from!

Meet three Elementary Science Olympiad programs that “went digital” and have maintained some of those changes to increase access to learning and expand their reach!

And check out our [Elementary Science Olympiad's Virtual Day/Night Manual](#) to run your own elementary STEM fun! We provide all planning materials and documents for a successful online event!

-Shari

Questions about Elementary Science Olympiad or interested in being spotlighted in this newsletter? [Contact me](#).

Going Digital

Three Elementary Science Olympiad programs show how adding online options allows programs to grow and thrive.



Bite Size Science in North Carolina

North Carolina Science Olympiad created the Bite Size program to supply ESO families and schools with virtual curriculum. Modeled after the national [MY SO](#) (middle/high school) program, Bite Size offers a free curriculum with the option to purchase online tests and games through a state membership or an individual family purchase. Events that normally rely on hands-on manipulation, like the lab events, were modified for the online space.

Super Sleuths

Before:

Students discern the identity of a mystery powder through a series of hands-on lab experiments.

After:

Pictures of the results of a series of experiments are shared with students to be used to determine the powder's identity.

Because NCSO is housed at NC State University, staff is able to leverage students in the School of Education to assist in curriculum development, a partnership which helps to keep program costs low, as well as gives teachers-in-training valuable experience in curriculum development.

Program continuation:

Throughout multiple shifts from in-person to hybrid learning and back, the Bite Size program has been helpful in ensuring that educators and families have consistent access to learning, no matter where students are learning.

The curriculum is free to access on the NCSO website (<https://ncscienceolympiad.ncsu.edu/resources/bite-size-so/>).

Special thanks to former NCSO Executive Director Kimberly Gervase.

Expedition ESO in Georgia

Using some district and program funds, Georgia ESO (GA ESO) built Expedition ESO. The program offers ten total challenges, released to coaches

monthly in groups of two events, such as Deep Blue Sea and Barge Building. Challenges contain a combination of content, online activities, and formative assessments, and when coaches decide their team has completed the challenges, students can receive a certificate and update a game board.

Dr. Sally Creel, STEM and Innovation Supervisor for Cobb County Schools, collaborated with science and STEM directors and event supervisors across the state to develop quality materials. While Dr. Creel's primary focus is creating STEM opportunities for students in her county, she sees the value of opening up opportunities for participation for the entire state of Georgia and is particularly pleased that Expedition ESO makes the Science Olympiad experience available to more students than might have had access in the past.



Program continuation:

“We found Expedition ESO was a great way for more students to participate in Elementary Science Olympiad activities, whether they were on a team or not,” said Dr. Creel. Some coaches and teachers used Expedition ESO as a supplementary non-competitive activity to engage additional students and expand access to learning, and some used it as a way to gauge interest and skill for competitive team membership selection. “Parents and teachers are definitely still engaged and using the activities. This has been a good way for us to expand our reach.”

The Expedition ESO program can be found here: <https://www.georgiascienceteacher.org/GAESO>

Special thanks to Dr. Sally Creel.

Elementary Science Olympiad Competitions in California

Bay Area Elementary Science Olympiad in California is run by [Science Gurus](#), a non-profit dedicated to advancing science education and performing Science Olympiad outreach for students in the San Francisco Bay area. The organization moved its annual tournament to the virtual space in the spring of 2020 by converting all of the knowledge events and the pentathlon into online contests. Event judges (area high school students) used Zoom rooms to meet with participants online to ask a series of questions. Participants submitted their answers through a Google Form and then teammates' scores were averaged for their team score.

Build events evolved for the online space, as well. Instead of building devices in advance, students demonstrated build skills live and on camera with events like Straw Tower.

Program continuation:

Science Gurus is looking forward to returning to in-person events next year, although they may keep some elements of the virtual competition, like the testing for Knowledge Events to provide the hybrid experience through the transition period.

Special thanks to Vidya Pingali.



Resources from ESO:

Plan a **Virtual Fun Night** with families with [Elementary Science Olympiad's Virtual Day/Night Manual](#). We provide all planning materials and documents for a successful online event!

Need **professional development** for your school staff or PTA volunteers? Explore [training options](#) with Elementary Science Olympiad.



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