

ASMS Science Fair 2008—Bio Innovation Week

Science Sparks Student Interest World-Wide

A flaming jelly-baby was among the attractions of a recent International Science Fair at the Australian Science and Maths School (ASMS) which brought 35 budding young scientists from specialist science schools in Korea, Canada, Thailand, Japan, Singapore and Western Australia to Adelaide.



ASMS, which is located on the Flinders campus, is a dedicated secondary school for Year 10 to 12 students. As well as providing a specialised curriculum, the school develops new approaches to teaching and learning in mathematics, science and technology.

The theme of the week's activities for the Year 11 level students was Bio Innovation, and after a welcome from Flinders Vice-Chancellor Professor Michael Barber, the participating students heard presentations from Flinders, ASMS and CSIRO staff on recent developments in biomedical engineering, sports science and food and nutrition.

ASMS Deputy Principal and International Programs Manager, Mr Graeme Oliver, said while the ASMS fair is just one of several junior science events held around the world annually, it is distinctive for its practical emphasis.



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The jelly-baby, for example, demonstrated the dramatic effects of high oxidation on a high-energy source like glucose during an experimental session on explosive chemistry; other hands-on workshop projects explored ‘Indigenuity’, botanical distillation and the biomechanics of the human body.



The visiting and local students also discussed ethical issues around the use of genetics in medical innovation, and had a crack at solving a murder mystery by employing techniques from forensic chemistry.

In common with real science conferences, there were poster presentations, and a journal covering the students' research activities during the fair was published.

“One of the differences of our fair - and one that people like - is the higher level demands we put on the students to contribute,” Mr Oliver said.

“Getting together like this also gives us an indication of how far these other schools are stretching the boundaries of involving their students in leading edge work - we want to be connected with setting the benchmarks around the world.”

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