

SCIENCE NOW!! AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

by Dr. Bonnie Schmidt

Bonnie Schmidt is the Director of Let's Talk Science, at the University of Western Ontario.


Elementary school science was the focus of the second annual science conference, Science Now!!, hosted at the University of Western Ontario (UWO) on Saturday, May 13, 1995. Organized by *Let's Talk Science*, UWO, Science Now!! was sponsored by 3M Canada Inc. with support from Canadians for Health Research and Alumni Western.

Twenty-six hands-on workshops showed 210 Ontario elementary teachers how much fun science and technology can be. Les Asselstine, Consultant from the Waterloo Board of Education, launched the day with an insightful, yet humorous, address which exposed the scientist in each child and the child in each scientist. For the remainder of the day, participants designed 'blue box instruments' and discovered the science of LEGO, children's literature, rivers, bugs and foodchains. They made gadgets that move and experimented with weather with Jay Campbell, meteorologist from CFPL-TV. They even challenged their senses with Dr. Milan Tytla, author of numerous children's science books and learned about tools and technology in the agricultural industry. Al Slater, frequent *Crucible* contributor, had grade 7/8 teachers doing small-scale science. In addition, two sessions based on "Science and Technology for Children" experiences developed at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC were offered during the day. Session leaders had been chosen because of their commitment to bringing fun, hands-on science and technology experiences to teachers of junior kindergarten to grade eight.

The key was FUN — laughter filled the buildings as teachers experimented with new teaching strategies, and exchanged ideas about science and technology in the elementary school classroom. A lunch-time opportunity to discuss the future of science education was made quite profitable for many participants by

exhibitors' donations of about 50 prizes ranging from coffee mugs to 3M's new CD-ROM "What's The Secret" and an 8-volume science encyclopedia donated by World Books Educational Products.

With the implementation of Ontario's Common Curriculum, teachers are expected to introduce science topics in grade one or earlier, yet many elementary teachers do not have adequate training in the field. As stated in the report by the Royal Commission On Learning, it is increasingly important to improve the confidence and competence of elementary school teachers in teaching science since it is critical that we foster a spirit of innovation in our youth. The Science-Now!! program offered teachers some tools to stimulate their students' natural curiosity and hopefully encourage further study of science.

The third annual Science Now!! conference will be held at the University of Western Ontario on Saturday, May 11, 1996. For more information of this and other *Let's Talk Science* activities, please call (519) 661-4029. 

Mark Your Calendars!

For

**Science
Now!!**

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