

APS ORGANIZES PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS AT ST. LOUIS MEETING

A group of 50 physics teachers and administrators from the St. Louis area participated in a high school teachers day session at the 1989 March general meeting of The American Physical Society. The session was organized by APS education officer Brian Schwartz, with Lillian McDermott (University of Washington) and Ruth Howes (Ball State University), who are members of the APS committee on education. Jack Wiegiers of University City High School in St. Louis acted as the local organizer. It was the sixth such session to be held at an APS meeting.

The high school teachers day was planned and run in close consultation with local teachers, which is essential to the success of this kind of program. Wiegiers and his colleagues in the St. Louis area developed a comprehensive mailing list for the session and determined the best day to hold it, considering local school schedules. The participation of local teachers ensured that the program was suited to the needs and problems of the St. Louis teaching community. The letters inviting local teachers emphasized the exceptional nature of the program and offered modest monetary support to help pay for a substitute to cover their classes and/or transportation costs.

A typical high school teachers session at an APS meeting starts with welcoming by APS officers. A lecture or two follows on a contemporary topic in physics, at a level useful to high school teachers. Support material is often provided. Lecture demonstrations for classroom use by the teachers themselves are a popular part of the program. A luncheon is provided, and other members of the physics community, especially the leadership of the APS divisions active at the meeting, are invited to attend and meet the teachers. A lecture on a pedagogical subject may follow.

The day usually ends with teachers meeting in subgroups to discuss the formation of local alliances that will enable them to continue meeting and sharing information.

The teachers also receive compli-

mentary registration for the APS general meeting along with a copy of the *APS Bulletin*. They are invited to attend general technical sessions as well as the physics equipment and book show.

One goal of the program at present is to encourage and help more APS divisions to sponsor high school teachers programs at their meetings. The APS division of plasma physics held a successful one on 4 November 1988 at its meeting in Hollywood, Florida, and division chairman Don Correll is planning another for the Anaheim meeting next fall. The history of physics division was involved in the high school teachers day that was held 18 April 1988 at the Baltimore APS meeting. The division invited the teachers to a regularly scheduled history of astrophysics session, provided a luncheon opportunity to meet

the speakers, and arranged a special astronomy session for the teachers in the afternoon.

The first two high school teachers days, held at APS general meetings in 1987, were not well attended. As soon as local teachers were included in the planning process, however, the teachers day programs became very successful. Often, the area physics teachers have never before gathered in such large groups.

"The teachers appreciate being recognized as professionals and supported in the work they do, and they profit from keeping up to date on physics research," said Schwartz. There has been considerable interest in the program from other APS units and other science and math societies. For further information, write to Brian Schwartz at APS, 335 East 45 Street, New York NY 10017.

TOPICAL GROUP ON FUNDAMENTAL CONSTANTS IS ESTABLISHED

Establishment of an APS topical group on fundamental constants and precise tests of physical laws received approval from the APS council in November 1987. Its organizing committee, chaired by William H. Wing of the University of Arizona, grew out of a committee of academic and industrial scientists convened by the National Research Council, which was called the committee on fundamental constants and basic standards.

The first issue of the group's newsletter appeared in the May 1988 issue of the *APS Bulletin* and was devoted to the group's genesis and purpose. In the issue, Wing observed that "for the otherwise sensible reason that science ought to be organized around what is known rather than what is not, there has been up to now no organization devoted exclusively to the search for contradictions and the study of mysteries in the subject of physics, regardless of subdiscipline."

The new group will focus on research activities that investigate and

test the underlying connections among physical laws, and on precise experiments related to fundamental constants and basic standards. Of particular interest to the group is the dialog between theorists and experimentalists about what and how to measure, and how resulting data may give new insights.

The group held its first symposium at the spring meeting in Baltimore in 1988. At present the group has 400 members and is planning two symposia on developments in standards, testing methods, and measurements, to be held on 1-2 May at the 1989 spring meeting in Baltimore. The group will also hold a general meeting immediately following the May 2 symposium. To become a member of the topical group on fundamental constants and precise measurements of physical laws, APS members should fill out the topical group invitation form in December 1988 *Bulletin* or check the appropriate box on the annual dues bill. ■