

The Joint Board on Science Education

-- What Is It All About?

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ABSTRACT

The Joint Board on Science Education unifies the science education activities of all the associations that are members of the District of Columbia Council of Engineering and Architectural Societies and the Washington Academy of Sciences.

The inception of the Joint Board on Science Education as an 'organization of organizations' came about through a desire for a unification of effort by a large number of member organizations such as the American Chemical Society, The American Society of Mechanical Engineers, the American Institute of Biological Sciences, and the American Society of Civil Engineers, to name but a few. Each group had its education committee in the general area of science, each emphasized its own specialty, and each went about its responsibilities as a sole agent. This generated a vast duplication of effort and no small amount of confusion in the secondary schools of the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. Compound this potpourri with similar contributions from the Smithsonian Institution, the National Institutes of Health, and the Office of Education, in addition to many other governmental agencies and more than seven active colleges and universities in the area. Complicate it further by efforts of individuals associated with these societies, institutions, and agencies, and the montage is complete.

The Joint Board on Science Education was created to bring order and direction to this picture. There is no counterpart to this group in the continental United States. It was thought that the Board could produce a synthesis of effort with the cooperation and broad backing of all member societies, which

would culminate in a highly effective local medium for the improvement of science education at the high school level.

Established by the Washington Academy of Sciences and the District of Columbia Council of Engineering and Architectural Societies in 1955, the Joint Board has had the function of coordinating the educational activities of the various technical societies comprising the parent organizations. It initiates and sponsors programs that are not feasible for a more specialized group. The Joint Board is incorporated under the laws of the District of Columbia as a nonprofit scientific and educational association and is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as tax-exempt because of its program in science education.

Twenty-four members comprise the Joint Board. Twelve are appointed by the District of Columbia Council of Engineering and Architectural Societies and twelve are appointed by the Washington Academy of Sciences for three-year staggered terms. A total of eight members are identified by both groups each year. You, as a subscriber to this *Journal*, are eligible for membership on the Board of Directors of the Joint Board — as a contact member in one of the many secondary schools served, or as someone who would be willing to talk to students on a particular subject. Contact your mem-

ber society chairman and specify your area of interest.

The members of the Joint Board represent a diversity of background and skills which are welded by a common interest in improving the quality of science education in secondary schools. A meeting of the entire Board occurs each month normally on the third Monday. Meetings of the more than ten committees into which Board responsibilities are divided take place when needed.

What are some of the activities that are provided by the Joint Board? These include the School Contact Program, which assigns one person per school to provide help for its teachers and students, career counseling, the sponsoring of science fairs and clubs, a program in which scientists and engineers visit schools to speak on their fields of interest, and a teacher recognition program.

The Board also supports science fairs and joins with other groups in developing, financing, and participating in the International Science Fair and defraying many of the expenses of the local fairs, including printing and awards. The Science Fair Committee coordinates such functions as safety, judging, counseling, and administration to promote uniformity in the fairs in the Washington Area.

What geographical areas does the Joint Board encompass and how do schools find out what is taking place? The Joint Board covers special counties in Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. Participation in Joint Board services has been increasing. Counties volunteer to cooperate with the Board. Once this is done, a professional person is assigned to each junior and senior high school. Each such person introduces himself to the principal and department chairman at the school; if services such as lectures or specific work with a student are requested, it is the responsibility of the assigned contact to provide for it. These services include trips to various organizations in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia, such as the Agricultural Research Center in Beltsville, Maryland, the Botanic

Garden in the District of Columbia, the Dulles International Airport in Virginia, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, The Goddard Space Flight Center, the Medical Museum of the Armed Forces, the National Bureau of Standards, the National Geographic Society Explorers' Hall, and many others. If a request for a speaker is made, it is relayed to the Joint Board secretary who then makes the necessary arrangements and sees that no duplication takes place. Speakers are available on a large number of topics. These speakers are rated, and the results of their work are evaluated so that continuing improvement may be achieved. A booklet listing these speakers is distributed to almost 400 schools.

A number of publications are also encouraged by the Joint Board. These include *The Reporter*, a newsletter formerly made available to all schools four times a year; the booklet *Project Ideas for Young Scientists*; and the publication *Directory of the Joint Board on Science Education for the Greater Washington Area*, which lists the contact person for each school, the address of that person, and the principal of the school.

The Joint Board was created because of the inability of any one organization to do the whole job. It is financed solely by contributions from those organizations that created it; its level of success is reflected by the level and degree of support these organizations are willing to provide.

Since the Joint Board on Science Education is your voice of expression for science education in the Washington area, you are always welcome to request information on its activities and services and to suggest ways in which it may render a more effective service. Should your organization wish to know more about the workings of the Board, a Board representative will be happy to come and address your group. To make such arrangements, address your correspondence to:

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