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Guest blog: Help kids reach for the stars with YouthAstroNet

By Rachel Clark

Written by Erika Wright, Science Education Specialist at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory.



How do we translate young people's intrinsic curiosity about space science into increased interest in STEM careers, particularly among girls and those from underserved communities? That is exactly what the Science Education Department at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics intends to learn through our YouthAstroNet Program and accompanying research project. You can [apply to host your own YouthAstroNet program](#), and receive free training, curriculum, and access to the experts on the YouthAstroNet Team!

What is YouthAstroNet?

The Harvard-Smithsonian Youth Astronomy Network (YouthAstroNet) is an online community of youth, educators, and scientists that aims to help youth typically underrepresented in the sciences gain confidence and identity as someone who can do science through unique access to the resources of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. YouthAstroNet engages youth in grades 5-8 in a number of hands-on STEAM-related activities from image processing to engineering/design challenges. As a member of the YouthAstroNet community youth can take their own images using remotely controlled robotic telescopes, process those images using a professional-grade image-processing tool to learn more about space, and even speak directly with scientist mentors from the Center for Astrophysics.

Contribute to the research

In addition to being a diverse online



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community, YouthAstroNet is an NSF-funded research project that aims to determine what strategies have the highest impact when it comes to turning interest in space into belonging and career aspirations in the STEM fields. By participating in the program, and utilizing the online portal with your youth, you and your students will provide valuable data about program factors that lead to positive outcomes for youth.



Join the network!

Educators from every style of learning institution—from afterschool programs to museums to traditional classrooms—are invited to join the network with their youth and utilize resources in a way that best suits their learning environment. **No prior astronomy knowledge is required.** Through a 3-week asynchronous online workshop, educators are trained to use robotic telescopes, image processing software, and the interactive portal itself, as well as given access to a proven set of hands-on curriculum. Following participation in the training, educators will have ongoing access to the wide array of learning resources, as well as support from YouthAstroNet staff.

Important Dates

Application Deadline: August 24, 2016 is the formal deadline, but applications will continue to be reviewed for the following week.

Informational Webinars: August 29 at 3:30pm ET and 6:30pm ET and August 30 at 1:00pm ET and 4:30pm ET

Asynchronous Training: September 7th–21st

If you are interested in participating, [please complete this brief survey](#). For more information, check out our [Recruitment Flyer](#).

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