



Secondary School Congress on Environment and Sustainable Development (CEMADS): an efficient tool to improve student knowledge on scientific research and communication.

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Secondary school students in Spain commonly show little knowledge on the way science is produced and diffused. To familiarize students with the scientific method and scientific communication, we have simulated a scientific congress on Earth Sciences at the secondary school level. Since 2002, the congress takes place yearly and it is attended by teachers and students from high schools of our hometown and beyond. Since its onset, the project follows several phases: (i) In the first phase (First Call), 14- to 18-year-old students are invited to register by means of brochures containing basic information on the congress (terms, conditions and main topics). (ii) Teachers from each participating school explain students the basis of scientific posters and oral presentations and encourage them to participate in the congress. (iii) Students prepare presentations describing the results of small scientific experiments carried out for this purpose and present them to the local organizing committee. (iv) The committee then reviews all presentations and select the best ones for public exposition. (v) In the final phase, the congress takes place. It includes registration, opening ceremony attended by educational authorities, plenary conference delivered by an outstanding local scientist, coffee break, oral presentations and closing ceremony. The project lasts for one day. It has been attended by an average of 250 students and teachers from 4 schools, and has been widely reported in the local media. Post-congress evaluation shows that the project is highly motivating for students and it improves student knowledge on scientific research and communication.