



Communicating polar sciences to school children through a scientific expedition

Maïte Lacarra (1), Gaëlle Lamarque (1), Zoé Koenig (1,2), Pascaline Bourgain (1), and Anne Mathilde Thierry (1)
(1) APECS, France, (2) Université Pierre et Marie Curie, France

APECS-France, the French national committee of the Association of Polar Early Career Scientists (APECS), was created in 2013 to improve the dissemination of polar sciences towards the general public and school children in particular, through activities developed in French for French schools. During the autumn of 2014, a young polar oceanographer from the University Pierre and Marie Curie, Zoé Koenig, participated in an expedition on board a sailing vessel in the Southern Ocean. APECS-France set up a new education and outreach project called "Zoé en Expé". Using different media, about 800 children, aged 6 to 12, and from 40 schools, were actively involved in the project. Interactions between Zoé and the students occurred before, during, and after the expedition, through a newsletter, a blog updated in real-time during the expedition, webinars (interactive video-conferences), and visits in classrooms when possible. Teachers were given a list of websites dedicated to polar and oceanographic science outreach and activities adapted to the age and level of the students were offered. Different activities were developed around the expedition, depending on teachers' objectives and children affinities. In particular, students were able to relate to the expedition by imagining a day in the life of Chippy, the mascot of the expedition. They were then asked to draw and/or write Chippy's adventures. APECS-France is now planning to edit a children's book using students' drawings as well as photographs taken during the expedition. Older students were also able to follow in real-time sensors released in the Southern Ocean by Zoé, measuring salinity and temperature. Throughout this 3-month project, children were able to study a wide range of topics (oceanography, biology, history, geography...). The expedition and the educational project allowed raising the awareness of children about the fragile and badly known Antarctic environment.