

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Lift Off - Secondary Space Education (2)

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SPACE EDUCATORS INSTITUTE: A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE FOR
EDUCATORS

Abstract

The Space Educators Institute is a 3-day professional development initiative focused on providing training and space themed resources for formal and informal educators in Canada and from across the world. Established by Western University's Institute for Earth and Space Exploration and Space Matters initiative in 2019, the Space Educators Institute aims to create a national learning ecosystem that unites educators across Canada. The vision is for the space community to support a strong science culture in Canada, through a networked learning ecosystem that could empower anyone to be a 21st century learner and global problem solver, and help accelerate innovation, productivity, inclusion and entrepreneurship.

In its inaugural year, the Space Educators Institute was held in-person over two days at Western University in London, Ontario, Canada. In 2020, the conference was held virtually over three days due to the pandemic. When compared to the in-person conference, attendance during the virtual conference increased by 500

During the virtual conference, the participants were asked to voluntarily complete a survey and poll at the end of the conference to understand the impact and engagement during the conference. The feedback also allows the conference organizers to address modifications to improve the conference in the next iteration. Based on a preliminary analysis of the data, all educators that responded to the survey noted that the sessions at the conference contributed to their understanding of space concepts. Ninety-two percent of the educators agreed that the conference sessions will enhance their pedagogical approaches to teaching space curriculum. All the educators considered the conference a good professional development opportunity. The remaining data is undergoing analysis and will provide further details on what the educators enjoyed during the conference, useful resources for their classrooms, as well as their recommendations in terms of topics for next year's conference.