

LABORATORY TOURS

To develop a better understanding of chemistry by school children, expose them to various kinds of chemical laboratories and local industry.

Organizational Details

Letters can be written to local chemical laboratories, universities or colleges and private industry. The various institutions could be asked to participate in National Chemistry Week by opening their facilities to school students.

If you get a positive response, ask

1. the age group of students who would benefit from the tour
2. the optimum size of the group
3. a description of the activities of the laboratory, facility
4. most suitable time and day.

It should be stressed that you do not wish to place excessive burdens on staff because you hope they will participate in National Chemistry Week again in future years.

From the information assembled, a prospectus was drawn up and circulated to the scientific consultants of the various local school boards. It is best to do this before the summer vacation. It is also helpful to work through the Science Teachers' Association, as well as the science consultants.

Tours could be booked on a 'first come; first served' basis. The coordinator should keep in touch with the participating laboratories and apprise them of the schools and teachers involved, so that any detailed arrangements can be made between the teachers and the laboratories directly. A follow-up with the teachers is important the week before the scheduled tour.

After the tours, the laboratories should be thanked for participating, and ask for their comments on how the tours might be improved.

Example

In one Local Section, of the 14 laboratories included in the program, 10 received visits and 62.5% of the available tour places were booked. During National Chemistry Week, 444 high school students from the region visited a chemistry laboratory. From the comments received from various laboratories, students and teaching staff, the tours went very well.

Another Local Section organized a series of tours to local industry open to high school students and the adult public. They advertised the tours in the city newspaper. The industrial tours basically followed the same organizational guidelines as the laboratory tours.

One drawback mentioned is the fact that in both types of tours the hosts do not wish students who are younger than high school age to participate and they prefer to have small groups (10-12). Make sure you ask about the suggested number and type of participants when approaching potential hosts. You could suggest that if a class is too large, one group can tour, while the other group attends a briefing and question period on the company or the laboratory.

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