
ADOPT-A-PHYSICIST PROJECT SUMMARY

Today's physicists aren't cookie-cutter Einsteins bent over notebooks or blackboards. They rarely study the block on the incline plane and most of them don't spend much time drawing circuit diagrams.

Today's physicists are professors, journalists, computer programmers, researchers, lawyers, physicians, managers, engineers, teachers, men, women, Hispanics, Asians, African-Americans, mothers, fathers, neighbors, volunteers, musicians, and rock climbers.

Adopt-a-Physicist aims to introduce high school physics students to the wide variety of careers open to people who study physics, and the wide variety of people who study physics. This project is motivated by the common misperception of high school teachers and guidance counselors that a physics degree is not very marketable. Adopt-a-Physicist dispels this myth by giving students the opportunity to personally interact with physicists in different fields.

Physicists and students participating in Adopt-a-Physicist interact for a three week period. Before this period begins, the physicists and classes (via the teachers) each create a profile page on the Adopt-a-Physicist website. Teachers then choose five physicists for each of their participating classes to "adopt", preferably from different career categories. By "adopting" a physicist, a teacher is registering his or her class for an online discussion forum hosted by that physicist.

During the three-week period that the discussion forums are open, students are encouraged to talk to their physicist about his or her career, educational background, most interesting projects, etc. Students are expected to report back to their class on their experience at the end of the three weeks. Since each class has up to five different physicists, each class can hear about five physicists with different careers and backgrounds.

Participating Organizations

Sigma Pi Sigma, the physics honor society www.sigmapisigma.org

ComPADRE www.compadre.org

American Association of Physics Teachers www.aapt.org

American Physical Society www.aps.org

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