including the ones we have described, in order to guarantee that the most is obtained out of teaching: formal lecture, experimentation, and working in groups.

This is still not enough. It is essential to allow pupils to structure their knowledge; this can be achieved by teaching them how to construct conceptual maps. In order to be able to do this they must be literate, since language provides thinking skills and is needed to associate different ideas. When pupils learn how to think on how they think - metacognition - they are able to structure their knowledge. They will no longer have to memorize information that is completely out of context, nor to spend so much time trying to find out what the teacher will ask during the examinations, because they will have successfully learned by understanding.

I will end this brief note by mentioning that some of the latest trends of pedagogy mention that "less is more" in the sense that it is wiser to spend time making sure that students master certain skills, such as thinking, creating, concluding tasks, learning how to learn, etc, rather than trying to get them to memorize lots of information which is now so widely available.

Julieta Fierro

TEACHING ACTIVITIES AT THE XXIVth ANNUAL MEETING OF THE BRAZILIAN ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

The XXIVth Annual Meeting of the Brazilian Astronomical Society (Sociedade Astronomica Brasileira – SAB) was held at Hotel Estancia, Barra Bonita, SP, Brazil, 2-6 August 1998. The meetings of SAB have as their main objective the provision of a view of the scientific activities developed in Brazil in the field of astronomy, and give the opportunity of a meeting of the scientific community and the creation of conditions for a better interaction between its associates.

There were about 300 participants. The programme consisted of 5 revision talks, 31 oral communications, 214 poster presentations and 2 exhibitions devoted to the following themes: Astrometry, Celestial mechanics, Solar System, Physics of the Sun, Stars, Interstellar medium, The Galaxy and Magellanic Clouds, Plasmas and high energies, Extragalactic astronomy and cosmology, Relativity and gravitation, Instrumentation, Teaching and history. Among the oral communications, one had the topic "Qualification of graduated students from the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) course: Time of formation and vocational development" by Lilia Arany-Prado. Among the posters, 10 were on the teaching and popularization of Astronomy.

There was a short course from 3-5 August for 35 previously enrolled and selected teachers, from the schools of Barra Bonita and surrounding cities, with the following content: Galaxies (Mariangela de Oliveira-Abans); Errors of astronomy in school books (Joao B G Canalle); Sun - our mother star (Andre Miloni); Theories on the formation of the Universe (Luiz C Jafelice); Observation of the sky (Paulo S Bretones); The gnomon (Oscar T Matsuura); Possibilities of life in the Solar System (Gustavo F P de Mello); Stellar evolution (Lilia Arany-Prado).

From 3-5 August the Museum of Astronomy and Related Sciences (MAST) set up a portable planetarium in the city's sports gym, and received about 1560 students from the schools for 8 shows a day. These students also saw exhibitions about the Sun and pictures of the comets Hyakutake and Hale-Bopp. In the gym's yard was set up a coelostat to observe the Sun, and a presentation of simple and inexpensive solar telescopes by Oscar T Matsuura who also gave a public lecture to about 200 people at the Municipal Theatre on the theme "New planetary systems".

There was a meeting of the Teaching Commission (CESAB) to discuss many projects, and the coordinator of the commission, Joao B G Canalle, presented a report to the general assembly of the Society on the activities from August 1996 to the present day.

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