



STEMBoost Newsletter

Issue XVII

December 2021

In-Person Invitation at Troy High School + Upcoming STEMBoost Satellite Invite

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On December 4, the Kennedy Middle School Science Olympiad teams participated in the in-person invitational at Troy High School in LA. We would like to congratulate the Kennedy Gold team for bringing home the second place trophy. The Troy Invite was the first in-person invite Kennedy has attended since February 2021. Under COVID-19 pandemic policies, last year's competitions were mostly in the format of Mini SOs, in which participants take tests at home through the Scilympiad platform. As the COVID-19 situation has progressed, a new competition format has been added in the form of Satellite tournaments, in which each team gathers at an individual location. Although the competition itself is still held remotely online through the Scilympiad platform, Satellite tournaments give teammates a chance to meet each other face-to-face again.



Meanwhile, the STEMBoost team is busy planning and sorting out logistics for the STEMBoost Invitational, which will be held in the Satellite format on January 22th. Officers met to distribute roles, and helpers were tasked with creating tests and setting up the testing platform. Currently 65 teams are registered for the competition. We hope the tournament will run smoothly with minimal issues on the day of the event. Thank you so much to everyone who has helped out!

Tournament Director: David Smith, Dylan Yang, Ryan Li

Program Manager: Andrew Zhou

Tournament Co-Directors: Amol Rama, Angela Zhang, Iona Xia, Joseph Lee

Kennedy Science Olympiad participants from various teams gather for a group photo at Troy High School

Fun Fact

How much DNA can one person have? (See answer in the back)

2021 UN Climate Change Conference: Progress or Empty Promises?

Ryan Li

The single largest threat to humanity's existence can be summed up in two words: climate change. In fact, nearly 200 countries gathered at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow, Scotland, which ended on November 13, to discuss action items to combat this formidable issue (1). Being held on an annual basis, the main goal of the conferences is to "stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations", such that it would not dangerously affect

global climate. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the convention behind the conferences, further stated that action needed to be implemented quickly enough so that ecosystems can adapt to climate change, there will be no threats to food security, and economic development can be furthered sustainably (2).

Among the outcomes from COP26 include over 100 countries signing the Global Methane Pledge brought forth by the US and European Union, pledging to decrease methane emissions by at least 30% from 2020 to 2030 (1). The limiting of the emissions for this greenhouse gas could help reduce 0.2°C of warming by 2050 (3), a huge step towards the 2015 Paris Agreement goal of limiting warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. In addition, an agreement for the phasing out of coal and subsidies (money given by the government) for fossil fuels was drafted, pinning fossil fuels as the culprit behind climate change for the first time in a written agreement. However, India and China fought to change “phasing out” to “phasing down”, which was ultimately included in the final agreement (4,1). Finally, the U.S. and China pledged to collectively limit global warming to 1.5°C by boosting clean energy, mitigating deforestation, and greatly decreasing methane emissions (1).

Although seemingly a productive conference, many climate activists remain skeptical about the true effectiveness and willingness for countries to follow through on their actions. The agreements did not include specific long-term strategies to limit global warming, nor did it include specifics on the rate at which each country must lower its greenhouse gas emissions, and to what level it should decrease to. Instead, more strict targets were agreed to be put in place at next year’s conference. In addition, the call to implement annual check-ins on the progress of the climate pledges by some developing countries went unanswered; with the current 5-year revisit requirement remaining unchanged. Some activists even went so far as to call COP26 a “public relations exercise” (1).

Yet, in the larger sense COP26 was still a success. As James Saltzman, a UCLA professor of environmental law, put it, the conference featured many separate agreements on smaller issues, including methane, coal, and deforestation, within global climate change, essentially breaking down a large issue into “more bite-sized approaches”. This method could be the key to bringing about large-scale change in the form of limiting global warming and climate change (1). However, the final burden for making these goals come to fruition lies on the leaders of countries around the world, and actually making the tangible actions that were drafted in COP26.

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