Opening Address

Astronomy Education

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Dear friends,

The summer issue of *Astronomy Education* is dedicated to inspiration. The inspiration of young researchers taking their first steps toward understanding the mysteries of the Universe and learning to apply the scientific method. The inspiration of educators who devise new teaching strategies while overcoming professional burnout. And the inspiration of amateur astronomers, whose fascination only deepens as they come to appreciate the grandeur of the cosmos and the beauty it reveals to those who take the time to look.

The central theme of this issue is student research and projects, ranging from data analysis to turning engineering ideas into working hardware. Here you will find the results of school and university research groups, methodological developments, and educators' perspectives on organizing inquiry-based learning.

Perhaps the most rewarding moment in any educational research project is realizing that a question which left you puzzled yesterday is one you can now answer with confidence and evidence. Framing a problem, gathering data, making mistakes, questioning assumptions, checking your results again—and ultimately experiencing the living process of scientific discovery firsthand.

Not every investigation leads to a breakthrough, and not every project succeeds on the first attempt. That is perfectly natural. An unsuccessful hypothesis, a bug in the code, or a component that has to be 3D-printed again can teach just as much as the most demanding teacher. The freedom to make mistakes and to embrace imperfection is an essential part of being a researcher.

We hope that the contributions collected in this issue will not only provide practical ideas, but also inspire you to develop your own. We wish you clear skies and the kind of scientific curiosity that transforms *"I wonder why?"* into *"Let's find out."*

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