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UMASS Boston Anthropology Outreach

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UMASS Boston Anthropology Outreach

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Claire L. Gold, Lecturer and Principle Investigator

Summary

- UMB Anthropology Outreach launched a pilot program in January 2011.
- The program serves as a science enrichment program for Boston area K-12 public schools.
- Science teachers are provided with fossil casts of early human ancestors and the expertise of UMB faculty.
- The program helps students further their understanding of biological evolution.
- The program was free to 13 prequalified Boston area schools.

Objectives

- UMASS Boston Anthropology Outreach promotes high quality, effective, and equitable teaching of biological anthropology at public schools as a means of increasing public understanding of anthropology and improving K-12 public education.
- This program aims to increase student exposure to biological evolution through the examination of early human fossil casts.
- The program promotes hands-on learning as well as critical thinking skills.

Methods

- 13 Boston area schools were selected to be part of the pilot program during the spring semester of 2011.
- Fossil casts were purchased with grant money provided by OSRP.
- The Principal Investigator was on hand during all visits to answer student and teacher questions.
- Each school was given a lab activity to complete which took approximately 1 hour.
- All students were encouraged to touch the fossil casts carefully.
- Students were also encouraged to think critically about their answers.
- Teachers were required to submit a survey at the end of their visit so that the effectiveness of the program could be evaluated.



Results



"My students better understand the concept of evolution, common ancestor, comparative anatomy, and the concept of time and evolution. The program was wonderfully hands-on which also allowed all of my students to participate. Most other enrichment type programs our school participates in do not specifically address the middle school science curriculum frameworks."

-Response from 8th grade science teacher, Point Webster Middle School, Quincy, MA.

Conclusion

- UMASS Anthropology Outreach was an effective program, **addressing a void in public science education.**
- Learning about the human fossil record helped students gain a better **understanding of biological evolution and anthropology.**
- According to teacher feedback and Massachusetts curriculum standards the program is most effective at the **middle school level.**
- In order to continue, **more funding must be secured.**

References

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- Smithsonian Museum, "What Does it Mean to be Human?" The Human Origins Project. <http://humanorigins.si.edu/resources/multimedia/videos/evidence-human-origins>

Further Information

If you wish to learn more about the UMASS Anthropology Outreach program, you can contact Claire Gold at:
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