

The School Star Party

THE SIMPLE, VANILLA ICE-CREAM, STANDARD, BLAH, BLAH DEFINITION:

Star Party - an activity organized for people to view wonders in the night sky.

Adding the word “School” to “Star Party” creates a world of difference...

The word “school” impacts the “organized activity”. School and Organized are oxymorons. Thus, a “school star party” is a far more complex animal:

Permission - TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATION, PARENTS, COACHES, FACILITIES STAFF

Venue

- It’s at a *school* (duh), but WHERE on the school grounds?
- A preliminary visit by star party organizer may be required.
- Viewing concerns: Trees, Buildings, Lights, Compass Directions
- Equipment concerns: Sprinklers, Spacing, Level & Stable, Eating (time and place), Etiquette
- Guest concerns: Rest Rooms, Access and Egress
- Organizational issues: Central Meeting Area, Parking, Weeknight
- Security and Safety: Monitors, First Aid, Drink for Operators
Unattended Students

Audience

- WHO is invited, and HOW MANY are attending this event?
Students (obviously), Grade Level of attendees?
Single class only? Others in same grade, other grades?
Parents and siblings invited?
Administrators, other teachers, general public?
Press coverage?

Education

- Is there a theme or an astronomical focus for this event?
- Is there a goal for the students?

General Star Party Concerns:

While the “school star party” has specific requirements and challenges, nearly every star party (no matter the audience or venue) has a number of issues to resolve:

- How many telescopes/operators are needed?
- Are there other stations to be manned (activities, binoculars, planispheres)?
- Who is recruiting and coordinating telescope operators and station attendants?
- Timing - what is up in the sky, and when (remember, Compass Directions above?)
- What is the weather contingency, and who makes that call? When?
- When and how long is set-up time? Is there a “daytime viewing” component?
- What is the phase of the moon on the night of the star party?