

GUEST COMMENTARY



LHS students Gideon Tzafri, Sean Fei, Amaan Khwaja, Ludwig Tay (not pictured) and Daniel Zhou help create video guides. [COURTESY PHOTOS]

Spreading the love of science

By Amaan Ijaz
Khwaja, 10th grade
Lexington High School

Over the past summer, my friends (Sean Fei, Daniel Zhou, Gideon Tzafri, Ludwig Tay) and I began working on a project that would help spark a love of science in other countries. For years we had been participating in the science bowl competitions at school which helped spark a love for science within us, and has motivated us to keep learning more. Since I would be going to Pakistan that summer we decided that it would be a great place to test out a science bowl style competition there. So with some help we were able to get in contact with people in Pakistan and we planned out two separate competitions. Leading up to the summer my friends and I wrote questions for the competition and prepared video guides to help people understand science bowl better.

Our first competition would take place in Islamabad, the capital city of Pakistan, with a group of 14-17 year-olds as part of a summer science camp hosted by the Pakistan Innovation Foundation, a local organization that seeks to promote science education. In order to help with the local logistics, we also partnered with students from the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), one of the leading local universities.

The Islamabad event



Amaan I Khwaja (LHS) moderates the final during the first competition in Islamabad, Pakistan, on July 25, 2019.

was the first real test of our idea. With more than 40 students participating, overall the competition exceeded all our expectations. Despite very little preparation time and limited exposure to such competitions before, the students did really well and had a fun time doing it.

Encouraged by the success of our first event, we worked with the students from LUMS university and with the support of the Center of Economic Research Pakistan (CERP - a local research organization), organized a larger competition in Lahore that had teams from local high schools participating. All our practice would be put to the test in our Lahore competition where we would run rounds simultaneously. In the end the competition was another smashing success. A lot of the schools we hosted loved the idea with everything working out perfectly. However,

the most astonishing part about it was that the school that won the competition was not one of the big city schools, but it was a less prominent suburban school that we invited.

As I write we are now planning a National level competition that will bring together the top teams from all previous competitions. The team and LUMS, with feedback from my friends and I in the LHS Science bowl team, are now also designing a mobile app that will allow competitions to be run using mobile devices, making them more accessible to a wider set of students. Over the next summer we plan on training more people to run rounds, and allow the program to become larger and even more self-sufficient. As we progress further, we hope to have this competition spark a nationwide interest in science, which could perhaps even spread to other developing nations.



Participants and organizers of the school science bowl competition in Lahore, Pakistan, on Aug.