

Getting An Education at School Club Roundup

Make a difference to young hams by getting on the air for this twice-yearly event.

Steve Williams, W3JX

In my long career in education, I spent 33 years as a teacher, guidance counselor, assistant principal, and a principal. I retired in 2003 as principal of a high school in Harford County, Maryland. In all those years, I spent a total of *one day* demonstrating Amateur Radio to young people. I had been invited to a middle school Career Day, where I made a few SSB contacts on 40 meters and talked about how ham radio could lead to career possibilities in math and science. The kids loved it, but after working my first School Club Roundup (SCR) in February 2015, I realized just how much time I had wasted during my years as an education professional. I could have done much more to introduce kids to ham radio, and the School Club Roundup is a terrific way to do it.

Working the Roundup

The School Club Roundup takes place twice a year, in February and October. School clubs from the elementary to the college/university level are encouraged to operate in the event. Non-school clubs and individual hams are encouraged to get on the air and work the school clubs, which compete against each other to earn the highest number of points.

Most of the contacts I made in the School Club Roundup were with individual stations, and many of them didn't realize what SCR was about. Many of those contacts asked me for more information, which I gladly provided. The event provided time for ragchews, which isn't often the case during a contest. The operators I talked to would say, "I just want to help the kids." Well, my friends, if you looked for and worked a school club, you did help the kids. Not only did you add a point to their score, but your state or province may have been new to that school club's log, and thus another multiplier.

I spent some time listening to QSOs, and everybody was great! The encouraging comments that ops made to the kids, and

the interest they showed in the school clubs' activities, means everything.

Fewer than 1% of my SCR contacts were with non-school affiliated Amateur Radio clubs. School Club Roundup rules are designed to encourage participation from non-school Amateur Radio clubs or multi-operator stations. Whether you are a member of an ARRL Affiliated Club, or just a group of ham friends using somebody's call sign and operating multiop, spare some time to work SCR. Even if you don't have a clubhouse with a station, you can get permission from your club's trustee to use the club call at your home station. SCR scoring gives school clubs an extra multiplier for each non-school club or multiop QSO, so your efforts can make a difference.

I used N3FJP's free School Club Roundup logging software and the assistance of its DX spotting feature. Not only could I find school clubs spotted by others, but I could direct others to the frequency of a school club.

It was worth my while to swing the beam



Neil Foster, N4FN, assists Megan Brown at Mill Springs Academy in Milton, Georgia during the October 2013 School Club Roundup. Megan has since gotten licensed, and is on the air as KM4HFY. [Martha Muir, W4MSA, photo]

and spend some time working DX. Two of my 27 DX entities were school clubs — one was ON4HTI, at VIVES Polytechnic University in Ostend, Belgium, and the other was DN2AA, a technical school in Madfeld, Germany.

Getting Kids on the Radio — Beyond SCR

During the event, I shared my career experience with some hams, and several of them asked me how to approach a school to offer Amateur Radio to the students. I hope the following thoughts are helpful.

A meeting with the school principal is a must. If you don't have a personal relationship with the principal, then do your best to find a faculty member or a parent who has that relationship to accompany you to a scheduled conference with the principal. It's important to realize that there can be inherent obstacles to establishing a school club. The safety of the students is the principal's first responsibility. Each school system has policies, risk managers, and the like. Dealing with liability concerns can be an issue. Some schools deal with trans-

School Club Roundup Is For Everyone

The School Club Roundup is a fun, biannual event that provides an opportunity for school club sponsors to train students on the proper use of equipment, while providing students with invaluable operating time in a contest environment. The objective is for Amateur Radio clubs at elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and colleges to get on the air and exchange QSO information with as many other school clubs, non-school clubs, and individuals as possible during the 5-day event. Individuals and non-school clubs are encouraged to participate and turn in logs at the end of the event.

The exchange for School Club Roundup is simple: Your call sign, RS(T), class (Individual, Club, or School), and US State, Canadian Province/Territory, or DXCC country/entity. Stations may be contacted once each on phone, CW, and digital modes. A station may operate no more than 6 hours out of 24 and may not count more than a total of 24 hours of the 107-hour event. This means that a good time to look for stations is just after secondary schools let out, but some stations can be found on during the day or in the evenings as well.

If you are a school club sponsor or an individual or non-school club who would like to participate in the School Club Roundup, please see the official web page at www.arri.org/school-club-roundup for information on rules, exchanges, and submitting your logs, or contact ARRL Contest Branch Manager Matt Wilhelm, W1MSW, at w1msw@arri.org.

portation issues related to getting the kids home from after-school activities. These are just some of the problems a school might face, that can lead to difficulties in trying to establish a new after-school activity.

If you can find some level of support from the principal, you can work together, most likely with a faculty moderator, to structure a program. Most school principals aren't hams, so you'll need to educate the principal about Amateur Radio and how it can enhance the educational experiences of students (which will be of the greatest interest to a principal). You'll also want to include specifics such as your goals for the students, how many students you can accommodate, what equipment you will need, and so on. Keep in mind that school budgets are tight, so it's not realistic to expect financial support up front.

If you are not successful in approaching a school principal, find your nearest Boys and Girls Club, church-affiliated youth group, Boy or Girl Scout troop, or youth group sponsored by the Lions, Rotary, Kiwanis, or other civic organization. You may find access an easier sell, and these clubs at times partner with schools to sponsor youth programs.

School programs and civic organizations are two excellent ways to introduce Amateur Radio to young people, but there are still more possibilities. Amateur Radio clubs can create their own youth programs. Also, some young people get hooked watching

operators at Field Day. Finally, like many of you, I had my Elmer. My cousin Pete, W3WC, and I learned about ham radio from the late Harry Caum, W3UD. I remember the joy he felt as Pete and I chased each other to Extra class licenses.

Make a Difference

As I tuned around the bands during School Club Roundup, making contacts and listening to other contacts, it occurred to me that there are hams out there — some professional educators and some volunteers — that give of their time and expertise (and financial support) so that students of all ages can experience the wonder of Amateur Radio. They deserve our praise and respect. They cultivate the future of our hobby in an age where ham radio could be seen as just one more technical activity.

You — yes, you — can count yourself among their number very easily. The next time the School Club Roundup is held, get on the air and work some school clubs. You never know when one ham radio contact will change a youngster's life forever, in a positive way. It can happen that easily, and you can be the one who brings about that change.

Steve Williams, W3JX, was first licensed in 1971 as WN3QQQ, then as WA3QQQ. He is the trustee of the Northeast Maryland Amateur Radio Contest Society, NE3MD, and has earned DXCC and Five-Band WAS. Steve has completed Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Certification Levels I and II, and is certified as a RACES opera-

tor for Harford County, Maryland. His professional career was in education, as a teacher, counselor, and administrator. He retired from Harford County Public Schools in 2003 as the principal of Havre de Grace High School. You can reach Steve at 918 Country Club Road, Havre de Grace, MD 21078 or w3jx@comcast.net.



Strays



A New Tower at WPI

When students at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) in Worcester, Massachusetts, returned for the fall semester, they found the WPI Wireless Association (WIYK) sporting a new tower. According to WPIWA President Andrew Mahn, NS1A (Class of 2017), the new tower replaces the previous tower atop the four-story Salisbury Labs building on the campus. The club station has long been located in a small “pent-house” atop the building. Mahn credited many people for helping to make the new tower possible, including the club's current and previous executive boards, the WPI Student Government Association, and many WPI employees who worked with club over the past several months to coordinate the installation. An alumni member of the club, Gregory Karp-Neufeld, W6GKN, was named as an integral part of the project. Mahn is eager to see student club members on the air, making 10 and 40 meter contacts from the new tower. [Matt Strelow, KC1XX, photo]

