

# JASON Project host researchers bring science to life for Humble ISD middle school students



Middle school students across the District were treated to a special visit by scientists and JASON Project host researchers Aaron Alford and Jason Osborne. The duo presented at each middle school, discussing their aquatic research and oceanic exploration, and showing them fossils of their most exciting finds and video clips of their adventures and excursions.

"Their visit," said Amanda McGee, Humble ISD Secondary Science Coordinator, "was so unique because it exposed students to the idea that science is something that you can do for 'fun' and isn't always just work. Jason and Aaron were able to give them stories and examples to make science come alive."

Alford and Osborne also introduced SharkFinder, a citizen science program that allows people to engage in real research endeavors by bringing the excitement of digging for fossils to classrooms.

"SharkFinder is a citizen science experience that our students will get to be a part of," explains McGee. "They will be helping to locate fossils in media that have never been studied before. Students and teachers all have the chance to be published for any finds they may make which have a scientific impact."

During their two-day tour of Humble ISD, Alford and Osborne also attended a special banquet where they had a very unique experience with this year's eighth grade Argonaut Applicants, including Humble ISD's JASON Argonauts Jake Ballard, CMS eighth grader, and Heather Hughes, WMS teacher. The host researchers were able to work with students one-on-one to identify possible fossils.

"It was really great," said Marshall Hartung, RMS eighth grader. "We got to meet them, talk to them and get up close with real fossil searching alongside both Jason and Aaron."

For many students, the researchers' visit and the

JASON Project as a whole has done much to inspire learning by engaging students in real-life applications.

"I think that the students, like me, felt as though they had a glimpse of what it was like to be a research scientist," said Hughes. "Experiences like SharkFinder tie learning to real life and encourage their interest in science."

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*- Heather Hughes, WMS teacher*

David Mouton, TMS eighth grader, wants to study architecture but has grown to appreciate science even more through JASON Learning.

"It's more hands-on and interactive," he said. "It is a lot of fun to be able to do it rather than just read about it on paper."

While scientific research was a major focus during the host researchers' visit, JASON Learning exists to expose students to many areas of STEM, or science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

"I am extremely hopeful that the visit by the scientists, along with the efforts of our teachers to implement JASON curriculum into the classrooms this year, will motivate our students to pursue careers in STEM education," said McGee. "Any opportunity we have to expose our students to the variety of careers that exist out there in the realm of STEM, the better chance we have to make an impact on their future career choices."

*Top Left: Laila Mouton examines a fossil find up close as part of the SharkFinder Citizen Science Program.*

*Top Right: Ross Sterling Middle School sixth graders Ryan Suge and Hector Lazaro examine fossils brought by JASON host researchers Aaron Alford and Jason Osborne.*

*Bottom: Aaron Alford and Jason Osborne answer questions from Creekwood Middle School students after discussing their work in oceanic research.*

