

PRESS RELEASE

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CURIOSITY UNLEASHED: SUMMER, SCIENCE, AND SKYPE A SCIENTIST



Few things are more enjoyable than learning about topics you're passionate about, especially under the summer sun. That's exactly what language learners at Centro De Lenguas in Buenos Aires, Argentina, had the chance to experience, thanks to their teacher Julieta De Santis, who continually seeks out creative ways to maximize student engagement.

This summer, Julieta connected her students with Dr. Grace Rustom, a Canadian Mental Health Scientist and Neuroscientist of Rockmanor Research Canada, as

part of the global outreach program Skype A Scientist, an initiative that connects classrooms with real scientists from around the world.

How It All Began

One June evening in Ottawa, Canada, Dr. Rustom opened her inbox to discover she had been matched with Julieta for a Skype A Scientist session. What made this event stand out was the eagerness of the students—who had already prepared a wide range of thoughtful and insightful questions.

“I could tell right away this wasn't going to be just any session,” said Dr. Rustom. “The variety and depth of the students’ questions showed genuine curiosity and excitement.”

Julieta regularly invites guest scientists into her classroom. “Engaging with scientists provides students with authentic insights, expands their cultural perspectives, and inspires them to see themselves as future contributors to the scientific community,” she said.

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-JULIETA DE SANTIS

Dr. Rustom felt Julieta was a unique educator with a rare combination of making extra efforts and taking steps to ensure her students are engaged and supported throughout their learning experience from the beginning to end of their meetings. “my impression was that in meeting Julieta before the session, she was a caring and engaged educator, passionate to connect with her students and have her students engage in the world around them”.

How The Event Unfolded

On July 15 and August 7, Julieta's students participated in two interactive sessions, diving into a wide range of topics in neuroscience and mental health. Highlights included:

- The mindset of perseverance and resilience, inspired by a quote from Winston Churchill
- Professional communication with kindness, guided by Mother Teresa's words
- The scientific method
- Pacing and taking breaks to improve focus and learning
- Challenges in neuroscience research and tough research questions
- Brain function, memory, and the mystery of déjà vu
- The science of sleep and dreams
- Emotions, love, and music
- Mental health and brain disorders
- Mental health and trauma
- *Tales of the Epping Forest*, Dr. Rustom's recently released book

Connecting Science to Possibility

In addition to the science content, Dr. Rustom made it a point to help students imagine a future in the field. She discussed how to get involved in science, highlighted institutions in Argentina with programs in psychology and neuroscience and emphasized the importance of women's contributions to science.

She introduced students to renowned figures like Dr. Brenda Milner, Nobel Prize winner Dr. Eric Kandel, Dr. Adele Diamond, and Dr. Idalis Villanueva Alarcón, encouraging students to explore diverse paths in research and innovation.

Prior to the first session, Dr. Rustom gifted the class a copy of *Tales of the Epping Forest*, her book that blends fiction with psychology concepts. Although time didn't permit in-depth activities with the text, students were exposed to key ideas of resilience, adaptation, and acceptance.

STUDENT EXPERIENCES

"I had an amazing time during the interview with Dr. Grace. It was very interesting and she's such an energetic person and explained every topic flawlessly"

-ISABELLA

"Getting to know Dr Grace has been such an enriching experience for me. She was super kind and empathetic. My favourite part was when she talked about "dreams"

-VALENTINA

"Getting to know a person whose passion for neuroscience can be seen from miles away was an amazing experience. I personally have had such an amazing time during the interview, not only because of the things I've learnt, but also because of the attitude Dr. Grace has put in her presentation"

-MARTÍN

Sparkling and promoting learner-driven curiosity: The most important thing scientists can do when sharing their specialty with students

Through the process, Dr. Rustom was delighted to meet Julieta's students. Dr. Rustom's aim was to make the presentation all-encompassing, attempting to answer the students' questions but also impart some basics in a memorable and fun way. "Skype A Scientist events can be inspirational opportunities that spark curiosity in students. The more memorable you can make these experiences and share what you are passionate about as a scientist, the more this may play a small role in shaping young people's minds, career choices, and open-up positive possibilities for learning and educational experiences," said Dr. Rustom.

In summary, this summer's event at Centro De Lenguas was more than a science session, it was an educational exchange between disciplines, languages, and continents. It was an experience that shows that learning can be joyful, interdisciplinary, and deeply meaningful. As mentioned by Dr. Rustom, "when having a chance to engage in and delve into subjects one is curious about as a student, genuinely, with supportive educators and in collaboration with experts - this is invaluable to students and what Skype a Scientist delivers. We need to do more of this in education. We need to create an inviting environment that is inclusive and welcoming of opportunities for learning, structured based on exploring learner-driven curiosity."

To request a presentation as a teacher, [make sure to register with Skype A Scientist](#).