ARISS is a NASA acronym that stands for ‘Amateur Radio on the International Space Station’ (ISS) and is an arranged conversation using Amateur Radio between an astronaut aboard the ISS and an education oriented organization on the ground.  ARISS is a joint project of NASA, AMSAT, and the ARRL. The organization is commonly a school group but could be a Boy Scout or similar group or a group gathered for a special educational occasion.  The Atlanta Science Festival had an ARISS contact as part of its events nearly 2 ago.

  Mill Springs Academy had an ARISS contact in September of 2013

(<https://www.facebook.com/MillSpringsAcademy/videos/10200496539195271/>)

and we are scheduled to have another one during the week of April 30 to May 4 of this year.  ARISS Radio Contacts are granted based on an application.  Generally the ‘window’ to submit an application occurs roughly a year before the actual ARISS contact.  <http://www.arrl.org/hosting-an-ariss-contact>

  The actual Radio Contact lasts roughly ten minutes.  This is because this is the length of time the ISS is actually over our school, from horizon to horizon.  Because of this, organizations hosting an ARISS are encouraged to have other activities going on in conjunction with the actual contact.  The last time we had our 7th and 8th grade science students launch the model rockets they had been building.  This time we plan to have a series of activities related to Amateur Radio technologies such as digital radio transmission, projects involving Morse code, and weather/time permitting, perhaps a fox hunt. We will have plenty of mentors around to help students and other guests with all of this.

  Students are invited to submit questions to be considered to ask ‘our’ astronaut.  A committee of teachers and hams familiar with ARISS will evaluate the questions and rank the top 20 or so questions.  The students who submitted the top 10 questions are invited to be the ones to actually talk to the astronaut.  After the top 10 questions are asked and answered, those 10 students will then ask questions 11 through 20, as many as time will permit.  (The dates for the submission of questions have not been determined or announced yet but will be sometime in early/mid February. The questions have to be given to NASA so that they can be sent to ‘our’ astronaut well in advance of our contact day.)

    We are in the process of inviting 10 or so schools to bring 10-20 students to join us at this ARISS.  We are limited by the number of people we can fit into our gym, where the event will be held. Our upcoming ARISS will be held between April 30 and May 4.  We will not know the exact day or time until the week before.  (The ISS astronaut’s schedules are very tightly planned around their assigned duties.)

   An ARISS Radio Contact is a phenomenal experience, one folks are not likely to forget how special it is.

 John K4SQC and I will be talking about ARISS, the ARRL Teachers Institutes, and MAREA at the National Science Teachers National Conference which will be held in downtown Atlanta from March 15 to the 18th. <http://www.nsta.org/conferences/national.aspx> Our session, called “You, Too, Can Drive a Mars Rover” and is scheduled for 9:30 AM on Saturday, the 17th, in room C210 of the Georgia World Congress Center. We will also be answering questions about ARISS at the Space Station Explorers/CASIS booth in the Exhibits Hall. Please encourage any interested teachers you interact with to see us in our session or at the CASIS booth.

  Let me know if I can provide more information.

Martha W4MSA

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