



1 Science Education and Outreach using Venus

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The imminent arrival of Venus Express spacecraft at Venus in April 2006 and the multiple fly-bys of Venus by MESSENGER spacecraft on its way circum-Sun trajectory to Mercury provide an excellent opportunity for education and outreach efforts internationally. Experience in recent years with missions to Mars, Jupiter and Saturn as well as to comets and asteroids have provided ample evidence of the immense public interest in learning about the solar system and its value in school education through formal and informal efforts. Planet Venus presents many new opportunities for enhancing science education and public awareness of the current issues in global climate change. Readily visible in the sky, Venus is easy to notice and its changing phases as seen through a small telescope distinguish it from other planets readily visible in the sky.

Amateur astronomers the world over have been obtaining useful images of Venus in blue/ultraviolet region of the spectrum for some time, and recently, some have even succeeded in imaging the emissions from the dark side at 1 micron. With its massive atmosphere of carbon dioxide, Venus presents a useful context in the current debate about greenhouse gases and future climates of the Earth.

The many common aspects of the environments of Earth and Venus present numerous links to science curriculum topics across grade levels and for increasing the awareness of the public of the value of comparative planetary studies.

An international effort is possible in the context of current and future missions to Venus and desirable.