

Playground planets Modelling the relative sizes of the planets and their distances from the Sun

From Charlie, UK

I added two extensions to the demonstration that worked really well and gave my pupils something to think about:

1. What does the Sun look like from each of the planets. I got this idea from Brian Cox's Solar System programme. I got the pupils to look at the model sun (1.4mm across) from different planet positions to give them an idea of what the sun would look like. This would have worked much better on an outdoor 30m or 60m solar system. But it shows them that pretty quickly the sun really does just look like a bright star.

2. Where is the next star? This idea came from the head of science. I asked the pupils, given the solar system has a radius of 3m where would the next star be. All kind of answers came out so really got them thinking. It turns out that the nearest star Proxima Centuri is 4×10^{16} m away. Which on the scale we were using is 40Km.

I then got them to think how little stuff there was out there and how much empty space and got them to think about how far the next habitable planet might be away and how long it would take us to get there. I then turned it around to the importance of us looking after the Earth.

From ELI Team, UK

This is amazing!

“To scale Solar System model built across seven miles of Nevada desert”

by Nick Summers

<http://www.engadget.com/2015/09/17/solar-system-model-desert/>

