

Let's get practical!



'Getting Practical' is a programme of professional development for both primary and secondary teachers that looks at making the most of

investigations and practical work in science. A recent study found that, although there are good-quality practical science resources available, some practical work in schools has limited effect on a young person's engagement and learning (SCORE, 2009).

The programme aims are to improve:

- the clarity of learning outcomes associated with practical work – by having a clearer idea of what children should learn from a practical activity, lessons can be planned more appropriately;
- the effectiveness and impact of practical work – children may leave practical science lessons having had fun but with a limited understanding of what the lesson aims were and whether they have achieved them.

Young children need opportunities to engage in hands-on exploration of objects, materials, phenomenon and places. This exploration leads to ideas that children can investigate and practical work develops naturally from questions to which children are motivated to find the answer. Good-quality practical work can not only engage children with the processes of scientific enquiry, but also communicate the excitement and wonder of the subject. It must be an integral part of the learning process, helping children to understand the world in a scientific way and promoting thinking as well as doing.

How does the Getting Practical CPD fit with a cross-curricular approach?

Enquiry lies at the heart of the primary curriculum and the Getting Practical CPD supports teachers' understanding of the purpose of practical work and how it can be used most effectively. It encourages teachers to reflect on their own understanding of how to teach enquiry skills and therefore enables them to use practical work effectively to develop these skills in any curriculum area; for example, investigating historical artefacts, evaluating products in technology or developing systematic geographical skills.

Comments from CPD participants:

Very good day that has provided a well-thought-out strategy and good training materials. Thanks very much.

I really enjoyed the hands-on approach as I was able to see the pupils' point of view ... it has made me evaluate my use of practical activities.

To find out more visit: www.gettingpractical.org.uk or to register your interest in receiving the Getting Practical professional development training, contact Kirstie Hampson: kirstiehampson@ase.org.uk

Reference

SCORE (2009) *Practical work in science: a report and proposal for a strategic framework*. London: DCSF. Available at: www.score-education.org/downloads/practical_work/report.pdf

Emergent Science Conference

A two-day conference for science practitioners working with children from birth to 8 years of age is to be held at Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln, on 8-9 July 2010.

It is aimed at those interested in how young children learn in science, those involved in the Emergent Science Network, and those who want to support children's scientific development more effectively: *Science in the early years (0-8 years of age) is very misunderstood; young children's abilities are often underestimated; the way they develop their scientific ideas, skills and attitudes and the factors that affect that development are not always understood; more thought is needed on how teachers can support young children's developing ideas and skills; the*

potential of cross-curricular and seemingly unrelated experiences is not always fully used.

The organisers state that the conference is particularly relevant to early-years teachers, teaching assistants, classroom support assistants, academics, researchers, curriculum leaders, school leaders, advisers and trainers. Intended outcomes are knowledge and understanding of scientific development in the early years and appropriate approaches to support early years scientific development.

For further information and application forms contact Bev Deakin at Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln LN1 3DY, tel. 01522 583703 or email: conference@bishopg.ac.uk

FINDING ARTICLES

Want to find an article and can't remember which issue of *Primary Science* it was in? Looking for an article with a particular focus?

Then help is at hand. In readiness for the imminent new ASE website, which will include a searchable database, we have produced a 'pull-out' section that will be published in the next issue (114) and will help you find all those interesting articles you have lost track of.

After an extensive trawl of the past 25 issues of *Primary Science* we have indexed our articles using a set of 23 categories, so enabling you

to find the ones you want quickly and easily in your own hard-copy issues or by logging on to the members' area of the ASE website and downloading the article in question as a PDF: www.ase.org.uk/hfm/journals/psr/issue_contents.php

THE CAMBRIDGE REVIEW: NEXT STEPS?

See page 37 for a summary of the 11 post-election policy priorities for primary education, recently published by the authors of the Cambridge Review of primary education in England, which is commending to both government and schools.