

Secretary of State announces cancellation of KS3 tests in science from 2009 (England): advice to ASE members

The Association for Science Education welcomes the Secretary of State's announcement. The change gives teachers greater flexibility when planning courses and promotes a wide range of curriculum opportunities at Key Stage 3. We believe that it will also increase children's engagement with science by encouraging a wider variety of learning and assessment approaches. It could encourage the development of new assessment skills and strategies that promote good learning.

Good assessment and pupil tracking still remain a key element to ensure every pupil in England is given the opportunity to reach their potential. Although there are no statutory requirements for schools to set targets for the end of Key Stage 3 in 2010, many schools will want to continue to do so to promote and monitor progression of individual pupils. However when it comes to measuring achievement we urge schools - and science teachers - to resist the temptation to continue simply with testing of pupils, using 'optional' year 9 test papers or past papers as a replacement testing system. Instead schools and science teachers should consider opportunities to use the range of in-class assessment strategies currently practiced by many colleagues to gain a better representation of your students' ability in all aspects of science; including developing transition enquiry skills in preparing students for KS4.

Why not use this opportunity to look at your provision in science and explore other resources? ASE supports effective science teaching, learning and assessment at Key Stage 3 through its conferences, publications and other resources.

ASE's 11-19 committee are leading a seminar at ASE's Annual Conference on Saturday 10th. January at the University of Reading entitled 'Opportunities for Curriculum Redesign'. Come along and share your experiences. This debate will lead to an in-depth article with exemplification on opportunities for 11-16 science education in April's edition of Education of Science.

Have you seen upd8 wikid? This is a teaching scheme for Key Stage 3 consisting of themed units that set science in relevant contexts. The upd8 wikid course has been designed to make all science relevant and contemporary, develop students who are confident with How Science Works skills, raise students' achievement and understanding, equip students for the Assessing Pupil Progress (APP) whilst

fitting the Secondary National Strategy framework for science.
www.upd8.org.uk/upd8-wikid.php

ASE's latest book in the ASE John Murray series 'Teaching Secondary How Science Works' (2008) contains a CD ROM of science teaching ideas aimed specifically at theories, evidence, creativity, ethics and assessing error and risk.
www.ase.org.uk/htm/book_store/detail.php?SIID=273

Another recent ASE book is 'Science Skills' (2008) - a photocopiable resource with CD ROM designed to help pupils actively develop their learning and understanding of the nature of practical work, graph building, concept mapping and reading for information.
http://www.ase.org.uk/htm/book_store/detail.php?SIID=277

To develop student's Cultural Understanding and understanding of the Global Dimensions to science, see ASE's City 1250 and 1001 Inventions resources, developed in partnership with the Foundation for Science, Technology and Civilisation with support from QCA
http://www.ase.org.uk/htm/ase_global/cusp/index.php

To further develop student's understanding of the Global Dimensions to science, students can explore science locally – on topics including energy, climate change, genetics and biodiversity - and share their insights globally with other young people across the world through ASE's award winning Science Across the World project www.scienceacross.org

Have a look also at ASE's www.schoolscience.co.uk for an extensive collection of contemporary teaching and learning activities.

ASE's annual conference – this year at the University of Reading from 8 – 10 January on the theme of Practical science - provides many excellent opportunities to explore how to make the most of your science provision at Key Stage 3.
http://www.ase.org.uk/htm/conferences/annual_conference_2009/index.php

Whatever path you and your school take, we hope science education will find this new situation a release from a straitjacket, not a change from one sort of restriction to another.

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