

Continuing professional development (CPD) is an ongoing issue for all of us. Regardless of whether or not we see it as a top priority, there is little doubt that we all need to engage in it just to keep doing our job on a daily basis.

CPD: an ongoing issue

At one level, CPD might involve no more than making sure we know the latest changes to the examination requirements for the classes we teach. At another level, it might be checking up on recent developments in our chosen discipline or the latest ethical dilemma resulting from another advance in science or technology. Overall, however, CPD is an essential element in maintaining and constantly enhancing our professional expertise through a combination of our day-to-day practice, discussions with colleagues, attending courses and personal reflection. There is also widespread agreement that high quality CPD should be available to everyone.

In science education we have made some progress towards making this a reality, but there is some way to go before CPD is something that is fully integrated into our professional practice. For many years there have been good courses available through local education authorities, university departments, ASE and others. Many individuals (teachers, technicians and teaching assistants) have taken advantage of these and engaged in a vast range of other activities which have helped them improve their expertise and the way they do their job. However, in the last two years, there has been a particular focus on how the situation can be further improved. The three theme articles in this issue of *Education in Science* provide insights into ways in which this might be achieved.

Enhancing expertise and finding inspiration

Peter Finegold provides a picture of the size of the challenge that exists when he reports on a survey commissioned by the Wellcome Trust to gather teachers' views on CPD (p. 7). The study is interesting in that, although it focused on science, the survey covered teachers from all disciplines. Thus, possibly for the first time from a significant and balanced sample, this survey provides a picture of how teachers perceive CPD and their experience of it. The findings certainly give pause for thought. John Holman's article (p. 10) marks the opening of the National Science Learning Centre in York. He reminds us of the way in which, through this major initiative, the Centre will endeavour to provide CPD that provides '*a balance between science (updating subject knowledge), pedagogy (extending teaching skills) and subject leadership (how to make an impact back in school)*'. Richard Waller takes the sequence a little further in writing about his own enthusiasm for getting involved in a range of CPD activities (p. 12). He not only shows the benefits for him as an individual, but outlines the impact this has on the school and the pupils. Indeed, Richard argues that his experience of professional development provides him with continued inspiration for both his subject and his teaching.

The ASE contribution

Enhancing and encouraging professional development through CPD and the introduction of arrangements for Chartered Science Teacher status also features as a key objective in the summary of the strategic plan for ASE over the next five years. After nearly a year of discussion and consultation, Council formally agreed the five key objectives and the initial operating plan at its meeting on 1st October 2005. Based on the existing strengths of the organisation, the plan sets out the direction for ASE in the medium term as it endeavours to provide the best possible support for its members and its aim of promoting excellence in science teaching and learning. My thanks go to everyone who has contributed to the development of the plan which sets a challenging agenda but, with the support of our members and partners, I am sure that we can achieve our objectives and further enhance the reputation and contribution of ASE to making high quality science education available to all our pupils.

As always, we would like to hear of your suggestions as to how we can work towards our goals. Please do not hesitate to send them to me at Headquarters. E-mail: derekbell@ase.org.uk

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Continuing Professional Development: Learning in action at the Science Learning Centre East Midlands.