

Science on Stage Festival

■ Bryony Frost

Science on Stage Festival: London 17th – 20th June 2015

In London 2015, 350 teachers from across Europe and Canada will converge upon London to participate in a four-day Festival, which will showcase some of the best practice in science education. Science on Stage is an initiative designed to provide a forum for teachers to exchange teaching ideas for the sciences, inspiring them and raising the profile of science teaching.

Since 2000, the UK has sent delegates to this Festival every year to represent teachers from across the country. These include teachers from across all disciplines, both primary and secondary. Contributions have also been submitted by educators involved in informal science learning.

In 2013, for the first time, the UK sent 13 delegates from the Primary Science Teaching Trust (PSTT), who demonstrated a huge number of the methods that they

use for inspiring primary children to colleagues from across the world. These included a selection of primary science activities, covering all areas across both key stages, designed to develop thinking skills. Activities are used to promote collaboration and include a range of material gathered and developed from diverse sources.

The Festival takes the form of a large bustling fair, in which over 300 teachers present their ideas and methodologies on small stands. Most comprise practical demonstrations, with flyers and information to take away. To complement this, there is also a series of workshops, seminars and stage shows, which allow projects to be demonstrated to the whole cohort in attendance.

Another unique aspect of the Festival is the opportunity to network with colleagues from other countries. The programme for the Festival runs into the evening, during which social events are



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held, often reflecting the culture of the host nation. Visits to places of scientific interest are also common – examples include the Copenhagen Science Museum and a steel factory in Germany.

The type of activity showcased at this Festival varies from the small and low-cost (for example, using beads and buttons strung onto pieces of wire to explain how proteins, enzymes and DNA form, grow and interact), to the colossal (building and launching solar balloons). There is a theme of international co-operation running throughout the event, with bursaries awarded in 2013 to enable teachers from different countries to co-produce projects after the Festival.

The projects also span a wide range of different educational interventions. Several of the projects featured in 2013 focused on informal science education; for example, a museum team who explored how to communicate the wonder of astronomy to the visually impaired. Still more of these projects focus on key skills in science, and how to teach them in the classroom. One of the projects that the UK featured in 2013 showcased the 'experiment mats' developed by schoolteacher Lara Woods: a simple, innovative mechanism to encourage students to see the process of writing up their experiments as more than just an annoyance. The mats initially provide prompts to help students learn to write reports, and eventually introduce them to the concept of peer review, encouraging their classmates to attempt to replicate their results using only their reports.

Evaluation has shown that 79% of attendees have gone on to use teaching methods that they came across at the Festival in their own classrooms, and 50% of attendees maintain between five and nine international long-term teaching contacts. Furthermore, teachers relish the opportunity to demonstrate the excellent teaching practice in the UK to their international counterparts.



The 2015 Festival will be the first time that Science on Stage has been hosted in the UK. As the host nation, the UK has the unique opportunity to invite up to 70 teachers to present their best ideas and projects to the rest of the world. The Science on Stage UK team are looking for outstanding and inspirational primary and secondary school teachers from across the science disciplines who have great practice to share. If you are interested in applying to be part of the UK delegation at the Festival, please visit

www.scienceonstage.org.uk/apply to find out more and fill in the application form.



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