

INSET: Sowing seeds and growing a network to inspire the next generation

Like many SUPI, Lancaster SUPI recognised the importance of working with teachers who play a key influence in the decisions and future plans of young people. Over the past four years we have hosted a series of in-service INSET days designed to support teachers in their professional development and hence increase their confidence in delivering improved learning outcomes (objective 4).

Looking back the initial event in 2013 was when the seeds were sown, and the outline structure and framework for what has become an annual event, looked forward to by teachers and university staff, was established. In 2016 not only had the numbers of teachers attending grown but so too had the network between teachers in different schools, and teachers and researchers. The model has remained broadly the same but in the light of ongoing evaluation and reflection it has evolved and grown to:

- respond to the needs of the participating schools;
- enable Lancaster researcher's to develop research informed outreach activities and resources that are being packages as 'Research in a Box' for use by teachers in schools.



Science teachers from secondary schools in the South Lakes School Federation

Preparing the ground

Reasons for the success of the STEM INSET days relate to:

Leadership: the STEM network was co-ordinated by a teacher who was respected within their own school and the wider network; he understood the needs of their colleagues and was able to work effectively with the Faculty Student Recruitment and Outreach Manager, who was well connected with departmental colleagues. Together they were able to devise a programme which served ongoing needs as well as offering enrichment;

Timing: - the collaborating schools had already agreed to hold their Autumn term INSET on the same day and this was important for finding a suitable time for teachers to attend the university;

Place: hosting the INSET day on campus provided teachers with access to university resources and raised their awareness of university facilities; it was somewhere new and neutral and over the years has become a more familiar place where teachers feel they belong.

Balancing the needs of school and university: a distinctive feature of these days is that they provide an opportunity for schools to address their own priorities, e.g. new national curriculum requirements, discussions about which exam board to use, AND provide teachers with a chance to learn something new, to engage with researchers from the university and to be inspired themselves.

Weeding, watering and watching the network grow

Each year the staff responsible for organising these successful INSET days have reviewed the programme and been willing to replenish with new ideas and opportunities. For an example of the programme see our case study 2015 'Pass it on: The mutual benefits of collaborative INSET'. This has required skillful and selective weeding as feedback suggests that most of the activities have worked well. However, as many staff return each year it is important that they have the opportunity to try new things, and to continue to be inspired, *"It gives us a real buzz out of coming here, it isn't just educationally focused, its focused on us as well I've been learning about [topic] today, and I think I'm going to use that when I'm teaching this, it's going to be a better experience for my students, it feels it's more centred on us, on our education, and inspiring us again about our subject which I think is really important"*.



Through this careful management, numbers of teachers and participating schools has grown.

2013	2014	2015	2016
15	36	56	60



Teachers working in the lab honing their skills

The INSET days also provided opportunities to raise awareness, *"I was surprised about the eye tracker because it was a Psychology presentation ... learning something completely different which is refreshing, teachers are usually thinking within their own subject, whereas this is something we can add to their experience, something extra which can be linked in some way to enhance the curriculum and teaching and learning"*. With their growing confidence teachers are returning and becoming involved in the co-creation of new resources (see [research in a box](#)).

Growing new networks

The STEM network is now established and arrangements are in place for 2017, and the possibility of opening the opportunity to schools outside the South Lakes Federation is being explored.

Attempts to sow the seed and grow other networks for instance in Arts, Humanities and Social Science subjects have proved more challenging. The lack of a unifying container (such as STEM) that brings different subjects together means that numbers for individual subjects are smaller, there is also a less obvious connection with some school subjects and the disciplinary departments. Despite this, the INSET for other subjects, whilst involving fewer teachers has engendered the same enthusiasm for working collaboratively with researchers. Professional development has also happened as part of other SUPI activities such as the Art and Science Masterclasses (case study 2015) where teachers reported gaining new ideas for teaching their subject.

The Lancaster TURN: Teacher University Research Network

This network has grown in response to feedback from teachers and researchers during the lifetime of the SUPI project. It is designed as a broader network which will be open to teachers from outside the original QES Teaching Alliance. It will meet three times a year with the intention of showcasing different facilities and areas of research across the university and providing opportunities for teachers and researchers to meet and discuss how research can be used to, inspire and influence teaching and learning in schools and universities, support professional development, and inspire the next generation of students as they make the transition from school to university.