

What we've learned about developing schools' outreach programmes

Practical ideas on how to plan successful events you take out to schools

When you're planning the content of your outreach...

Plan the topics of the session to be **fun, memorable and varied**. Choose things that the school can't do itself, hasn't the time to organise or simply wouldn't think of. It's good to have **special props or equipment**, and to use chemicals or materials that the school wouldn't usually have. The presentation style can also be more entertaining or **showbiz-like** than normal school. See if your existing events can be adapted for outreach.

Define just **two or three clear learning objectives** for each session, and link everything to the **National Curriculum** as this is the biggest attractor for teachers.

When you're working with primary school audiences...

Primary school children tend to have lots of **enthusiasm** for special events. Talk to teachers in the run-up to the booking about classes that might prefer a practical approach or who could be stretched more. You may be booked to give the same show to one or two classes at a time, repeating it through the day. Tailor the show to the appropriate **Key Stage**. You are likely to use the main school hall for your shows, so be aware you might have to clear your equipment during lunchtime.

When you're working with secondary school audiences...

With secondary audiences, you often have to work harder to earn their **respect, attention and trust**. A great demo or some arresting images can get their attention and provoke a reaction. You may be booked to present the show to a very big group at once, so be prepared.

When you're scheduling outreach programmes...

Work out how many sessions you can offer in a day, and the **costs** of taking your events out, including the travel and possible overnight stays if the distance is great. Set out clear costs for different options. Plan your calendar, noting periods like Science Week or local festival times, when you might get busy.

Try not to book just one event per school – offer them a **full day** of events. If you travel unusually far for a particular event, book other regional schools for the same period so as to make travelling more efficient.

Decide whether you need to have a formal **health and safety agreement** so that the school guarantees a safe place to work and appropriate supervision of children.

Keep in touch with teachers close to the event date, so they have the correct **expectations** and feel **informed and excited** about the event. When you leave for a venue, make sure you have the map, teacher's contact name, timetable for the day and any other details you need.

When you're planning your props and materials...

Try to have props and materials that are specifically for use by the outreach programme. Store your props in a **safe and well-organised** way, to save time. Ensure your props are smart, clean and professional-looking, possibly with a uniform style, so that they give a good impression in schools.

After the show is over...

Try to get **feedback** from pupils as well as teachers. You could video some pupils to get their reactions to the show. Prepare a feedback form (two sides of A4 maximum) for teachers to fill in, preferably before you leave the venue. Compare what people say the workshop was about with the learning objectives you identified, to see if they match.

Seek ways to **showcase** the project to maximise its benefits to your organisation and in order to share learning. It may be a good case study for other museums, or result in future collaborations.

Further resources:

See what the Science Museum's Outreach Team is up to at the moment:

www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/outreach

Visit www.anim8ed.org.uk to see the results of a schools outreach project involving the National Media Museum.

See a Teachers TV programme about Science Museum outreach sessions with KS3 children:

<http://www.teachers.tv/video/27087>

Find out what we've learned about developing science shows and workshops by reading other sheets in the *What we've learned* series:

- What we've learned about writing and performing science shows
- What we've learned about developing workshops

If you're a teacher, visit our training pages to see what opportunities for Continuing Professional Development we currently offer:

http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/educators/whats_on_for_teachers/professional_development.aspx

See easy-to-copy science experiments by the Science Museum's science comedy troupe Punk Science in their book *Do Try This At Home* by Jon Milton.