Science Museum Research Summary: Creating content for Continuing Professional Development teachers' courses in museums

This document is based on key findings from a Science Museum Talk Science Research Report covering 18 months of work with teachers. Please contact us on learning@sciencemuseum.org.uk if you would like more details.

What do teachers want?

Teachers don't just want facts – they want everything to be related to their work. Course content should therefore address issues such as changes to the curriculum, managing student behaviour, catering for classes of mixed ability (including Gifted and Talented students) and dealing with students for whom English is a second language.

Teachers want all aspects of a training course to be useful practically to their everyday work. As a result, what teachers like best and least about a course seems to relate directly to what they found most and least relevant. Even though they may enjoy a session that is less relevant, they would rather it was replaced by something more directly applicable.

What kind of activities should be included?

Just like everyone else, teachers enjoy the chance to get involved – they don't want to be lectured at all day. It's essential to keep their interest and engagement, so make the most of any opportunities for interactive and fun activities that your museum offers.

What level of knowledge should we assume teachers already have?

Do not assume that what is obvious to you is obvious to them. This is particularly the case with regard to how activities, resources or approaches can be used in the classroom, how they fit into the National Curriculum, where teachers can source materials for the activities/resources and how activities could be used for groups of different abilities or at different Key Stages. This information needs to be spelt out to teachers by the course presenters and in the handouts / giveaways - or they are unlikely to use the activity in the classroom.

What do teachers want to take back with them?

Give teachers all relevant resources on a CD or memory stick at the end of the day. It's also helpful to provide them with a short PowerPoint presentation, so they can show their colleagues what they've learned.

How can we help ensure the course has lasting benefits?

You can provide follow-up on the course by setting up a website, emailing updates, and inviting questions from teachers once they've returned to work.

Further resources:

Find out what teachers say they'd like to get from CPD courses through a summary of key findings from a Science Museum Research report:

- Science Museum Research Summary: Providing effective CPD teachers' courses in museums

Read more about running effective teachers' courses in a practical sheet in the *What we've learned* series:

- What we've learned about running teachers' courses

See the Wellcome Trust's report on CPD, *Believers, Seekers and Sceptics*, at: www.wellcome.ac.uk/About-us/Publications/Reports/Education/Believers-Seekers-and-Sceptics/index.htm

See what CPD expert Thomas Guskey says about measuring the effectiveness of CPD: http://www.hfrp.org/evaluation/the-evaluation-exchange/issue-archive/professional-development/a-conversation-with-thomas-r.-guskey