

SCHOOL-SCIENTIST PARTNERSHIPS: WHAT MAKES THEM TICK? A CASE STUDY FROM THE CSIRO SCIENTISTS IN SCHOOLS PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

Scientists in Schools (SiS) is funded by the Australian Government and managed by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO). This national program seeks to bring volunteer scientists together with teachers into an ongoing professional partnership, with the aim of increasing awareness of contemporary scientific endeavour and knowledge within school communities. The most valuable mode of partnership is one where scientists work with students and teachers in a continuing relationship with the school. This is the essence of the SiS program. One such partnership forged by Concordia Lutheran College, Toowoomba and a microbiologist from the University of Southern Queensland has been progressing since September 2007. The aim of this presentation is to showcase the various activities undertaken during this partnership, highlighting the importance of the open, flexible and creative nature of the relationship. One of the key advantages of such partnerships is the mutual benefits that can be gained not only from the students and teachers interacting with the scientist but also the reciprocal exchange in pedagogical practice that scientists can receive. This session will also detail some of the experiences gained from this three-way interaction and will provide the opportunity for participants to share related experiences; particularly looking at how similar school-scientist models work and the elements that drive success and longevity.

Keywords: *student-teacher-scientist interaction, mutual benefits, flexible partnership, long-term, successful*