

The Geoscience Ambassador: Training opportunities and skill development for tomorrow's geoscientists

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How can high schools geoscience teachers engage younger students who are not taught geoscience subjects at lower key stages? As passionate practitioners of learning, high school teachers are in a seemingly ideal position to inspire young learners to study and pursue a career in the field of geoscience. However, recruitment of students is often challenging if students do not have the opportunity to study the subjects first.

For geoscience subjects such as geology to remain sustainable and viable at A-level, it is imperative that high schools invest time and effort in improving student awareness of subjects which students can access later in their academic career.

Perhaps one of the greatest, most accessible and overlooked promotional tools for a geoscience subject are the students themselves. In 2016/2017, a new scheme at Hessle High School and Sixth Form in Yorkshire, United Kingdom, offered senior A-level geology students the opportunity to become "Geoscience Ambassadors". These students were recruited to act as champions for their geoscience subject (geology) to support with inspiring and engaging younger students who may otherwise not choose the subject.

The traditional method of disseminating learning is to offer "train the trainer" sessions where training is delivered to peers for onward cascaded teaching and education. On returning from the 2016 Geosciences Information for Teachers (GIFT) workshop at EGU, training was provided to other teaching professionals on the activities and key learning points, the training was also disseminated to an enthusiastic group of A-level students to enable them to become Geoscience Ambassadors.

This cascade approach moves away from the tradition of training high school staff alone on new pedagogies but additionally trains young and enthusiastic 17 year olds to work with groups of younger students in the local and regional area. Students use their newly discovered knowledge and skills to inspire younger students with their enthusiasm and passion for geology. The student ambassadors work with cohorts of junior students to share learning through projects and lessons in previous GIFT subjects including the Rosetta space mission and Mediterranean geoscience.

This scheme has provided younger students with valuable knowledge and skills and an awareness of post 16 courses but also offers ambassadors the chance to practice and learn transferrable skills beneficial to their future higher-education careers. The scheme has also allowed their passion for their subject to be shared with others. All of the 2016 Geoscience Ambassadors successfully went on to apply for degrees in geology or geoscience related disciplines at university.

The ambassador scheme offers an alternative approach to supporting the engagement and understanding of the geosciences. By encouraging students to become Geoscience Ambassadors, they have the opportunity to compound their knowledge of the subjects as well as inspiring junior students who previously had little awareness of geoscience.