

COMPANY OF EDUCATORS

INITIATIVES OF FREEMEN

March 31 2014

The third discussion event with four presentations from Freeman about the initiatives that they are involved with, was held on March 31 at Gresham College. The meeting was chaired by the Upper Warden in his role as Chairman of Education Committee. Each presentation was scheduled for 25 minutes including time for discussion.

The first presentation by Dr Rona MacKenzie was on STEM developments through University Technical Colleges (UTCs). Rona MacKenzie is the principal of Lincoln University Technical College which is starting teaching in September 2014. There are 17 UTCs open already and another 15 will open this year with a further 13 in 2015. UTCs are for 14-18 year olds, non-selective, non-fee paying and have between 500-800 students. The UTCs are regionally based with the requirement to meet the needs of local industry. The Lincoln UTC will draw students from across Lincolnshire and will focus on Science, Engineering and Mathematics, the STEM subjects.

In all UTCs the curriculum offer starts with an academic core curriculum and then technical specialisms are introduced. These technical specialisms are to meet the needs of local industry so employers contribute to the curriculum design which aims to integrate the technical and academic aspects. The third dimension to the curriculum is the development of professional and personal qualities. Teaching of core skills such as literacy and numeracy will be context led. It is hoped that students when they leave will have a choice between employment, university study or training. The main sponsors of the Lincoln UTC are Siemens, The University of Lincoln and Lincoln College. In addition 249 regional employers have been consulted about the curriculum design. The employers will help to plan courses, deliver presentations, host trips and visits and conduct master classes in their area of expertise. Industry specialists are not teacher trained but will also help in assessing outcomes of projects. Students are on site from 8.30 until 5.00 to reflect a typical day in employment and no additional homework is set. Students are being recruited at present from a range of schools and colleges in Lincolnshire and a key criterion for the offer of a place is the student's keenness to come and not the parents!

All UTCs are funded as academies and the equipment is expected to have a 10-15 year life. Students in Lincoln will be able to share facilities with the university and college. It is seen as important that the student experience keeps up with the needs and demands of local industry.

The second presentation was entitled 'Unlocking Potential'. The presenters were Jan Tallis and Susie Whigham from the charity School-Home Support. The charity, which is national, was founded in 1984 with the aim to help children and young people, who are not attending school, get back into education. The charity works with children, schools and families to help break what can be an intergenerational cycle of deprivation. It has been shown that at the age of 6 a less able child from a well-off supportive background will have overtaken a more able but poorer child in attainment and by the age of 10 the gap has widened further.

Unlocking Potential was a 3 year programme in 20 schools involving 808 children in 5 geographic areas: Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Islington, Bradford and Bristol. The aim was to improve attendance and attainment by tackling some of the underlying issues and to help parents support learning. There were three levels of help given. Tier 1 was for all the children and families in a school so individual families were not singled out. Activities included: family learning courses, parenting courses, adult learning and community events. Tier 2 was for selected families and involved a home visit, working with the family on literacy and numeracy, tracking progress fortnightly and ending with a celebration event. Tier 3 was targeted support for children with issues at home creating a barrier to learning and is seen as the most important part of the programme. One to one sessions are held both at school and at home with a school-home support practitioner and referrals are made to specialist agencies where appropriate.

Evaluation of the project was done by the Institute of Education. For 82% of children there was improved attendance and the overall figure for attendance rose from 90.9% to 95.9%. Positive gains were made in attainment in numeracy and literacy and the improvements were maintained over a period. There was an increase in confidence levels leading to improved learning behaviours. Parental engagement also improved.

One big issue for the charity is telling schools about what they do. The growth at present is on a school by school basis. There is not sufficient money to work with all schools but there are plans to develop an on line support system for other schools. One comment made was that how best to spend the pupil premium is an issue for schools where there are relatively few children in this category so the online system could be helpful.

Gloria McGregor, who suffers from hearing loss herself, gave the third presentation on the free Website which she has developed to practise lipreading. The Website is www.lipreadingpractice.co.uk. With hearing loss, seeing is a really important tool. It is not practical to rely on sign language as most people do not know this so learning to lip read can be a really useful lifeline. Lipreading is an art not a science. Good lighting, good acoustics and a quiet environment are important. Lipreading can be more successful if the context of the speech is known. There are classes for lipreading but provision is patchy and in many areas they can be expensive. The Website has been developed so that people can practise lipreading in a safe environment. Skills and practice material in the sessions focus on learning to recognise the lip shape and movements of most of the sounds and to follow passages of prose at beginner and developmental levels. There are also useful phrases that can be adapted and used to make participating in everyday activities e.g. going to the doctor, less stressful. The material contains video clips and written exercises. Removable subtitles give a visual record of what has been said and make the work self - correcting. Gloria worked as a primary headteacher and has used her teaching skills in developing the material. In her presentation she had the audience practising lipreading which illustrated that it is not a straightforward skill. She hopes that the Website will encourage people to go on to classes when they feel ready. There are many users some of whom are based overseas.

She is working with the Essex Hard of Hearing Planning Group to promote lipreading classes and to raise awareness of the difficulties faced by the hard of hearing and to show how everyone can help. As a means of doing this she will to continue running

her voluntary lipreading support groups, continue her work with National Associations and as a next step endeavour to undertake voluntary work in schools.

The fourth presentation was by Paul Bowers Isaacson accompanied by Dr David Collier. The talk was entitled 'Cross generational education: clinical trial stories'. The work falls within the area of science and society and the public understanding of science. David Collier is based at the William Harvey Research Institute, Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry, where he is joint director of the clinical trials unit and is working with Paul Bowers Isaacson, a curriculum developer, on a project entitled 'TrialsConnect'. It is a project in lifelong learning and shared learning drawing on the experience and professional expertise of current and previous clinical trial patients. The plan is to create resources which can be used by different groups to help understand what clinical trials are about. Typical users of the resources could be: sixth form students wanting to understand more about the profession of medicine; or students studying science and society and how to make science understandable to the general public or older people who are taking part in a clinical trial and want to understand what is involved.

The first stage is enabling patients to tell their stories: their medical history, the trial outcome and their involvement in the clinical trial. Last summer a one day meeting was held with 50 patients, 50 U3A (University of the Third Age) members, 40 sixth-form students and 30 undergraduates who acted as participant/observers. The aim was to foster cross generational discussions on clinical trials. The interaction between children and parents is different from the interaction between children and grandparents.

Resources which have been developed so far include discussion group questions with a group leader guide and a basic introductory presentation. In preparation for publication later this year are items such as: training materials for students telling their story, support material for students in extended research projects or preparing for medical school application, on-line questions and answers prepared by clinical research scientists.

Further information is available at info@trialsconnect.org

The evening gave the audience an interesting introduction into four varied topics and generated lively discussion which was still going strong when we had to leave the venue! As one participant said it demonstrated the need for educational organisations to have a range of other organisations around to help in the education process. If anyone reading this article would like further details on the initiatives presented then the speakers can be contacted via the Clerk. Ideas for next year's event are welcomed.