

Teaching matters

≡ *Articles and opinions on primary teaching, with tips and ideas for the classroom* ≡

Exploring the Scientific Process through Scoilnet

Introducing JellyLab Online, a science resource for primary school teachers



PhD student Amy Courtney in the lab at the UCD Health Sciences centre.

There is no doubt that in the modern world, we are surrounded by science and technology. A recent survey conducted by iReach for the RDS found that 96% of parents of primary school children in Ireland identified the growing need for their children to learn life skills such as creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration (also known as 21st century skills). Over half of those parents surveyed believed that science was the third most important subject after maths and English.

Scoilnet has a huge repository of science resources at primary level. To ensure that resources are of a high quality and standard, Scoilnet regularly collaborates with universities, educational institutions and government bodies to deliver scientific material aimed at primary school children. The goal is to introduce pupils to scientific material and have them engage with the subject in a constructive and meaningful way. Collaborations to date have included The Marine Institute, UCC Eureka and Trinity College Bridge 21. The result of the most recent collaboration is JellyLab.

Amy Courtney of UCD Medicine explains:

JellyLab Online is a web-based resource which uses unique marine animals to help introduce scientific thinking and the scientific method in the classroom. Developed by Amy Courtney and Mark Pickering, research scientists in the UCD School of Medicine, it was designed to fill specific gaps in the landscape of primary school science resources.

First, many of the current resources are demonstrations of scientific knowledge, rather than the scientific process. JellyLab Online focuses on 'how we know', rather than 'what we know'.

Second, while many university-based research scientists interact with primary schools, large areas of the country miss out on these opportunities due to geographical location. By making a web-based resource, the material can be accessed anywhere. Another key principle is that the videos are based on real research being carried out in Irish universities, and features actual scientists, showing the important human element in the scientific process.

Most importantly, JellyLab Online was designed to be flexible, and can be used with the pre-made worksheets or adapted into other classroom activities.

This flexibility will be enhanced as the current line-up of videos is expanded to include videos focused on the effects of plastic pollution on marine animals, and footage of animal behaviour in the wild.

Exploring the scientific process does not have to end there. There are a multitude of collections and theme pages across a range of topics within the science curriculum that are available on Scoilnet such as Scoilnet's primary STEM page, the Explorers Project page, Kitchen Chemistry and INFOMAR. Also, as reflective practitioners, teachers are always encouraged to either share resources they have found to enhance teaching and learning in their classroom or upload resources they have created themselves to Scoilnet.

JellyLab is available on Scoilnet at <https://bit.ly/2J5stUU>.

PATRICK COFFEY, PDST Technology in Education