



News Release

28 August 2012

AYRSHIRE TEACHERS GO STATESIDE FOR GLOBAL PILOT SCHEME

Six teachers from schools across South Ayrshire have returned to their classes following an education and training summit in the United States ahead of the introduction of a new global pilot scheme in their schools.

Teachers Katrena McDonald and Sarah Proctor from Ayr Academy, Grant Crawford and Danielle Hawkins from the town's Kyle Academy and Joanne Jeffers and Claire Thompson from Marr College in Troon all took part in the three-day training conference at the University of Michigan in Detroit over the summer break in advance of introducing the Big History Project into their classrooms.

Aimed at pupils in S2 and S3, the Big History Project weaves evidence and insights from many scientific and historical disciplines across 13.7 billion years into a single, accessible origin story. One that explores who we are, how we got here, how we are connected to everything around us, and where we may be heading.

The 12-month pilot, which is funded through former Microsoft founder Bill Gates' Catalyst Three, will see the three Ayrshire schools work with schools in Australia and the United States testing the online curriculum, promoting multi-disciplinary learning across subjects.

The six Scottish teachers were the only group from the UK involved in the training programme following a competitive application process, organised by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), involving seven local authorities from across Scotland.

Speaking on his return from the United States, Grant Crawford from Kyle Academy, said: “The Big History Project is about introducing the real and meaningful links between subjects such as Chemistry, Biology, Physics and Geography into a broad historical narrative. As such it should provide pupils with a scheme of work that will provide a 21st century education for 21st century learners.”

Joe Wilson, Head of New Ventures at SQA, said: “The skills the group brought back with them from Detroit will undoubtedly benefit the pupils in their classrooms next term. This scheme will help young people learn how to look for and identify the connections between subjects and enable them to understand how to analyse and solve problems no matter what topic they’re working on. These skills will be essential when they start working towards their National Qualifications. I am sure that many more schools in Scotland will be interested in taking up the programme from autumn 2013.”

South Ayrshire Councillor Margaret Toner, Lifelong Learning Portfolio Holder, said: “This is a superb opportunity for our schools to be part of a global project that is cutting edge, showcases project based learning and fits very well with the principles of Curriculum for Excellence. Participation in this global project will be a great learning experience for the students.”

Andy Cook, Director at the Big History Project, said: “Working with the Scottish Qualifications Authority and the pilot schools has offered a great opportunity to compare, contrast, collaborate and ultimately improve the Big History Project to benefit students worldwide. It’s an honour to welcome these schools to the Big History Project – especially ones with the vision and commitment to really do something innovative and unique.”

Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland’s Languages, Alasdair Allan, said: “The Big History project is an exciting project in its scale and ambition and I’m delighted that teachers from Scotland are engaged from the outset. There is an excellent fit with Curriculum for Excellence with a strong emphasis on connected, relevant and creative learning which can inspire young people and help them develop the skills needed for the 21st century. The investment in professional development from those who participated and supported this project is very welcome and reflects our aspirations to build on the strengths of the teaching profession.”

An Education Scotland spokesperson, said: “The Big History project, with its global connectivity and its use of project based learning, is exactly the type of learning that excites and develops learners. It fits well with the ambitions of Curriculum for Excellence and that’s why it will be supported into the future by Education Scotland, including being show-cased on our website and other publications.”

- ENDS -

Notes to Editors:

Pictures of the group are available on request.

About SQA:

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is the national accreditation and awarding body in Scotland.

SQA works in partnership with schools, colleges, universities and industry to provide high quality, flexible and relevant qualifications and assessments - embedding industry standards where appropriate. We strive to ensure that SQA qualifications are inclusive, accessible to all, that they provide clear progression pathways, facilitate lifelong learning and recognise candidate achievement.

There are approximately 1,500 centres approved to offer our range of qualifications.

Find out more – www.sqa.org.uk

About Big History Project:

Find out more about the Big History Project: www.bighistoryproject.com