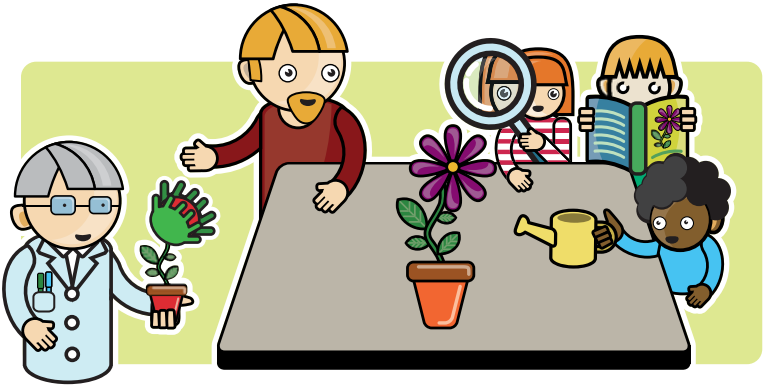
Supporting teachers through sponsorship



What does this consist in?

A sponsor is a confirmed scientist (research scientist, engineer, teacher…) either currently working or retired, who accepts to create sustainable links with the class and provide support for the teacher and pupils in learning about science. All year long, or throughout an entire project, he remains in contact with the class by written correspondence, telephone calls or email. He also meets the teacher at least once a semester to assess preparation and the results of the sessions.

A few characteristics of Teacher Support through sponsorship

The sponsor is a scientific reference for the teacher. He provides theoretical and practical assistance that can take on various forms:

- **intellectual support,** to help specify a concept, interpret a phenomenon, refine an investigative approach, define the limits of a model or generalisation.
- **a scientific guarantee,** when it is necessary to define a project of scientific activities and the related target notions.
- **assistance with experiments,** by contributing ideas for experimental activities or lending equipment for carrying them out.
- **organisational support,** from the design to planning of projects or arranging visits on site.

Testimony

When scientists from the University of Paris 13 sponsor classes in the Seine-Saint-Denis…

This type of Teacher Support first involves setting up a dialogue between teachers and research scientists so that each protagonist can familiarise himself with the other's work and have a more tangible representation of what it consists in. Therefore it is important to meet at least once in the workplace, school and university. Science Week was an opportunity to organise a preliminary encounter in the researchers' laboratories where they presented their work.

This is how cooperative projects were imagined. Exchanges took place mostly by email thus enabling communication back and forth between the scientist and the class.

***Maxime Fauqueur**, pedagogical advisor*

Testimony

During a discussion with a CM1 class (9 to 10-year olds), we wanted to introduce the study of matter by showing that chemistry is a discipline present in the children's everyday lives without them necessarily being aware of it (from cooking to cosmetics, through dyes, medicines…). But very quickly it became clear that for them chemistry represented pollution from factories. We therefore had to confront them with experiences from their own lives so that, little by little, they could identify other, more positive, forms of chemistry. When, at the end, in response to the question "Is chemistry good or bad?" the answer was "both", you therefore felt as if you had really contributed to making the children more objectively aware of these aspects of chimistry..

***Christophe Joussot-Dubien**,*
research engineer at the CEA (Atomic Energy Commission) in Marcoule.

A few guidelines for effective Teacher Support

At the start of the Teacher Support experience, the sponsor can observe from a session of scientific activities in the classroom the following:

- the scientific level of primary school pupils,
- the type of questions they ask,
- the type of reasoning they develop.

Pitfalls to avoid, hurdles to overcome

Excessive enthusiasm and insufficient attention to primary school curricula:

- these curricula are a valuable guide as they take into account the pupils' abilities according to age and class.
- Irregular contacts: sponsorship is a long-term commitment. It is important that the scientific tutor agrees to maintain a certain level of accessibility and regular contact.
- Contributions that the teacher has difficulty exploiting alone: the information supplied by the sponsor should be precise, accessible for the teacher and easy for him to use on his own.