The idea to run a one day conference for chemistry Teachers was initially discussed a few years ago, but we needed to be the official Secondary and Further Education Group before the launch could occur. The new group was officially recognised in January 2015 so a launch in July 2015 seemed perfect. Preparation and planning of the programme (attached) was designed with carefully chosen topics to attract chemistry teachers. In fact for a first conference of this type we had hoped we would reach 25-30 delegates. 55 delegates attended so we were very pleased with the turnout.

I welcomed everyone to the conference and we launched with a presentation about the major “A” level reforms from Dr Neil Wade, Head of Qualifications at OCR. This presentation provoked discussions over the breaks and good attendance at the breakout sessions in the afternoon. I appreciate there is still more to discuss and would consider the “A” level changes to be included in another meeting.

Dr Bob Worley was then welcomed to present his microscale chemistry, which he demonstrates to teachers all over the world. With his enthusiasm and ideas, together with a demonstration thrown in, both of Bobs’ afternoon sessions were very quickly full. Teachers got stuck into the practical work in the afternoon learning new ideas and methods of teaching familiar topics. The photos below show some of these clever ideas.

The planning committee decided we would try to be inclusive of all types of education so we included a Work based learning session. Many teachers had not considered this type of qualification, the relation to the world of work and the opportunity of apprentices. Jessica Bull and Nick Backstrom shared their practices. Many schools offer vocational courses, more is known about these courses these days but still staff had not appreciated the opportunities open to their students, interesting discussions followed.

There are many Chemistry Educational Coordinators through the country now so we invited our local coordinator Dr Joanna Buckley to present about what the RSC has to offer in activities, resources and general support. Again many teachers were interested in this aspect of the RSC and the afternoon sessions were busy with discussions from Jo about how the RSC can help, the Learn Chemistry Partnership and other opportunities.

As expected with a busy day, teachers did not have a moment with all the networking and different sessions so an Educational Fun Lecture allowed some time to sit and enjoy the lecture by Dr Peter Hoare. The aim to inspire teachers to think about doing fun lectures themselves. Some simple but effective demonstrations were shown and hopefully everyone went home with some new ideas.

I closed the conference, asking the audience if they would be interested in another similar event. The opinion was a resounding “yes” next year. So the date is Tuesday 5th July 2016. If anyone has any ideas for topics, please let us know.

Report from Dr Julie Hyde CChem FRSC

Chair of the Secondary and Further Education Group.