

Mission Possible

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| Project Title | Mission Possible |
| Project Team | Associate Professor Debra Panizzon, Dr Terry Lyons (SiMERR National Centre), Dr Keith Fleming (University of New England), Gordon McClennan and teachers from The Armidale School. |
| Period | October each year |
| Funding Agency | |
| Organisational Base | |

Description

[↑ Top](#)

Primary students in rural localities rarely have the opportunity to visit exciting investigative centres like Questacon, Science Works, zoos, or museums because of the city locations. Yet, we know that educational experiences of this type are crucial because they give students the chance to engage with science in very different learning environments to the normal classroom. Yet, with a little organisation and a few helpers, it is possible to create an exciting day of 'investigative science' for the students in local communities regardless of its location. The project has been operating in the Armidale region for 11 years.

Mission Possible is based on a problem-solving strategy developed originally by Jenny Feely (1991). The day is based on two stages. First, students attend four training workshops in the morning around the following six themes: Bridges and towers; Electricity; Using elastic energy; Falling and flying; Time; and Floating and sinking. Second, the afternoon session involves students being placed into groups of 20 to undertake a relay that incorporates five science and technology tasks based on the morning training sessions. The winning team is the group that completes the relay in the shortest time without penalties.

Participants

[↑ Top](#)

Year 6 students in local and regional schools and their teachers; UNE preservice teachers

Findings

[↑ Top](#)

Outcomes

[↑ Top](#)

Journal articles

- Panizzon, D. & McLennan, G. (2003). Mission possible: A day of science, fun and collaboration! *Investigating*, 20(2), 9-14.
- Panizzon, D. & McLennan, G. (2005). Creating exciting opportunities to enrich and engage primary students in science. *Gifted*, 135, 15-17.

Impact

[↑ Top](#)

The Year 6 students who participate in the day always emerge very excited and full of praise regarding their experiences. For the pre-service teachers (Bachelor of Education), the day provides an opportunity to observe students exploring and investigating science and technology in an informal context. While many come along to the day somewhat tentative given their inexperience with teaching, they emerge both optimistic and enthralled.

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[↑ Top](#)

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Page Index

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[Participants](#)
[Findings](#)
[Outcomes](#)
[Impact](#)
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