

# Changing children's understanding of the brain

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The impact attending a neuroscience lecture can have on children's understanding of the brain has been analysed by researchers from the University of Bristol in a paper published this week in *PLoS ONE*.

Professor Bruce Hood and Dr Nathalie Gjersoe of the School of Experimental Psychology analysed the impact of a science lecture based on the 2011 Royal Institution Christmas Lectures "Meet Your Brain" on Bristol children from low performing schools.

Professor Hood, who gave the original [lectures](#), wanted to know whether the experience left any lasting [understanding](#) of four basic facts about the [brain](#) including the common misconception that we only use 10 per cent of our brain.

Children were first assessed on their knowledge about the brain. They were then invited into the University of Bristol as part of its widening participation programme where they attended a lecture given by Professor Hood based on his Ri lectures which are characteristically fun and interactive.

The children were then assessed again one week and six weeks after the lecture. Analysis revealed a major improvement in understanding one week after the lecture that was retained at six weeks.

This is an important finding because it demonstrates that by simply attending an engaging public lecture, children's understanding was significantly improved, indicating impact.

This has major relevance to academics who are increasingly involved in public engagement especially as next year the Research Excellence Framework assessment will take place whereby UK higher education institutions will be evaluated for their research activity in terms of its benefit to society.

**More information:** "Changing Children's Understanding of the Brain: A Longitudinal Study of the Royal Institution Christmas Lectures as a Measure of Public Engagement." Nathalia L. Gjersoe, Bruce Hood. *PLOS One* Nov 15, 2013. [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0080928](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0080928)

Provided by University of Bristol

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