Ken Silburn grew up in a low-income family in the suburbs of Sydney, and was inspired to become a science teacher by the example of the fine teachers who taught him in his youth. Motivated by the desire to increase students’ educational prospects, particularly those from modest socioeconomic backgrounds, he has made a big difference. Many of Ken’s students have received scholarships to study science at university, and one class was placed first in Australia in their category of the International Science Championships. His students also volunteer their time to participate in robotics and astronomy nights.

In his lessons Ken uses a variety of multimedia projects together with integration of wider issues such as environmental science and sustainability. His ability to drive innovation and effective educational practices has been recognized with the New South Wales Engineering and Science award for Innovation in Mathematics and Science teaching, a National Educational Leadership award, a Microsoft Innovator award, and numerous other teaching and community awards. In 2015 Ken was awarded the Prime Minister’s Prize for Secondary Science Teaching – the highest teaching honour of its type in Australia. As a participant in NASA’s India Spaceward Bound Program, he has also delivered science workshops and training courses to Indian teachers, and has recorded online lessons for India’s National Institute for Open Schooling.

In 2015 he was invited under the Australia India Education Council’s Eminent Lecturer Research Program to undertake science outreach activities with students and teachers in India. In conjunction with his participation in the NASA India Spaceward Bound Program in the Ladakh region, he delivered teacher workshops to over 200 science teachers in Government of India schools, Delhi state government schools and private schools. In addition, he conducted science workshops for students in 12 schools and also recorded a science lesson for online delivery through India’s National Institute for Open Schooling (NIOS) which will reach over 2.5 million students.

Ken’s commitment to increasing the educational outcomes of science students across NSW has been demonstrated as the founder and coordinator of the iSTEM (invigorating Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) program. This program was personally designed and gives talented science students from a range of schools across his region the opportunity to participate in science enrichment activities on weekends and school holidays. He has been able to organise support for the project from numerous companies and institutions including the University of NSW, University of Western Sydney, the Sydney Powerhouse Museum, Sydney Observatory, Inghams, ANSTO and Google.