

Case Study: Measuring the Impact of the Scottish Learning Festival

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Introduction

The Scottish Learning Festival is the largest education conference and exhibition of its kind in Scotland. Throughout its ten year history, the event has been extensively evaluated by Learning and Teaching Scotland to ensure that delegates are benefiting from attendance. However, the real success of whether or not attendance is beneficial is in the long term impact that it has on the delegate and their classroom, school and professional practice. This ensures that the event is continuous throughout the year and not simply a two day event which promotes innovative ideas.

Background

Karen is a Nursery Teacher at Cleddens Learning and Childcare Centre in East Dunbartonshire

Karen has taught at all primary stages, but particularly enjoys working with children at the nursery stage. Before taking up her current post, Karen was seconded to LTS as Development Officer on the ICT in Pre-school Project. This was followed by a year's secondment to her local authority, East Dunbartonshire Council, as Assistant Manager Early Years Developments.

Karen is an active member of the early years community and has been involved in many areas of work, including taking the lead in an Associated Schools Group as part of the Assessment is for Learning project and being a member of Masterclass. In Karen's current role she leads on curricular matters and is going to be a Glow coordinator within her establishment. She was recently commissioned by Learning Unlimited to write three booklets on Active Learning.

Benefits of attending the SLF

Karen has attended, and presented at, many SLF and SETT conferences as it was previously known. The main reasons Karen gives for attending are:

- the high quality speakers,
- chances to share ideas,
- the networking,
- the fact that it is free.

Impact of the SLF:

As a result of attending SLF, Karen generally takes back new ideas for supporting children's learning. Typically after an SLF event she provides staff with notes of the event and shares key points with management. The staff team discuss ideas gained from the conference and decide how these could be tailored for the centre, to meet the needs of the children and their families.

At SLF 2008, Karen attended a number of sessions that were of interest. Thanks to attendance at a seminar on collaborative planning, Karen has changed the format of planning in the Centre to incorporate collaborative planning with children and parents. An interesting aspect is the use of the Planning Wall to consult with parents and the associated use of mind-mapping.

Collaborative planning fits well with some of the key issues covered in a keynote by Charles Leadbetter, which Karen also attended. He spoke about the importance of relationships and learning 'with' and 'by', rather than the more traditional approach of learning 'to' and 'from'. He stressed the importance of involving learners in making decisions about what they know already and what they need to learn. These points have been included in the new collaborative planning formats which Karen developed.

A seminar and round-table discussion on Assessment for Learning provided many excellent ideas of how to involve children in setting themselves increasingly challenging learning goals. Staff in Cleddens have already begun to incorporate some of these ideas and will continue to build on this next session.

Information about Moving Image Education also provided inspiration for children making their own digital videos through a storyboard approach.

These examples demonstrate that attending SLF has had a direct impact in Karen's establishment and will in turn have an impact on the learning experiences of the children.

Karen has already registered to attend SLF 2009 and is looking forward to attending and learning from this years event.