

Conference notes from the largest Science Education conference in Europe



Edible chemistry cookies!

LEADING CHANGE IN SCIENCE EDUCATION

Report by Dr Karen Blackmore, Dr Sue Howarth and Linda Scott.

We went to the largest Science education conference in Europe. We came back with champagne, top feedback on our presentation, lots of ideas, new professional contacts and very happy students!

As Science Educators, a major event for us in the UK is the Association for Science Education's annual conference, held at the University of Reading.

Dr Karen Blackmore (primary education Science senior lecturer), Dr Sue Howarth (secondary education Science senior lecturer) and Linda Scott (secondary education senior lecturer Science and Science Technology Engineering and Maths / STEM manager for Herefordshire and Worcestershire) from the Institute of Education at Worcester headed south to Reading along with many of our keen postgraduate student secondary Science teachers.

Along with over 3,000 Science educators, exhibitors and other interested people, we had an amazing time.

Sue and Karen's presentation: 'Science Clubs and Beyond' was supported by the Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour's new Education Officer, Charlotte Evans. Other attendees included student teachers, Science teachers from the UK and abroad, Science education lecturers and local authority consultants. After entertaining and educating our audience with ideas ranging from owl ecology, edible 'science cookies', 'magic' wands and burning teabags, we were delighted to receive excellent feedback. The session also provided a platform for making research contacts with audience participants and their colleagues.

Other highlights included:

- Meeting Wynne Harlen, much-respected author of many key education texts ;
- One of our PGCE students winning a bottle of champagne for being the most accurate in measuring micro volumes for the Royal Institution (well done, Andreas Bergman)
- Listening to Steve Jones talking about the nature v nurture debate
- The privilege of hearing Sir David Attenborough speak about his career and, at the age of over 80, his next projects which include 3-D filming.

The keynote Nuffield Foundation Lecture on 'The Adolescent Brain' provided Linda with copious notes and plans to review relevant sections of our Secondary PGCE programme in the light of the recent research information.

Our delivery of national STEM focal areas such as the promotion of further and higher education and careers in STEM subjects, and the celebration of 2011 as the United Nations International Year of Chemistry, was given a boost by accessing the ideas, resources and contacts presented by other lecturers and exhibitors. Closer to home, planning our contribution to the collaborative project between STEM staff in the Institute of Education, the Education and Outreach staff from Worcester Cathedral and Worcestershire L.A. was similarly enhanced by judicious networking.

Prior to attending the conference (in their own time on Saturday 8th), our PGCE students were briefed about the excellent range of opportunities available and they managed to pack in several lectures or workshops as well as scouring the three exhibition marquees for information, advice and 'freebies'. They each returned with bulging carrier bags full of resources and a multitude of ideas which we look forward to hearing about and seeing implemented in their placement schools.

A wonderful conference and we are already planning our contribution for next January's conference in Liverpool. If anyone would like to know more or would like to be involved, do get in touch with Sue (s.howarth@worc.ac.uk). Proposals for the 2012 conference are due in April this year.

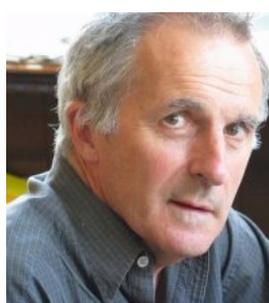
Information about the STEM education work with local schools and communities and how staff and students can become involved is available from the STEM Office in Bredon 14, stempoint@worc.ac.uk or by emailing Linda at l.scott@worc.ac.uk



Charlotte Evans, ASAB Education Officer, on the left, with a participant at the UW presentation, getting involved with an owl ecology project.



Wynne Harlen, left, and Karen Blackmore



Professor Steve Jones and Sir David Attenborough