

EVENT NAME: School Leaders' Conference 2011
"Leading Technology for Learning - Time to Refresh"

DATE: 6-8 April 2011

TOTAL ATTENDANCE: 370 participants

ORGANISING BODY:

The Centre for School Leadership, Learning and Development is a joint venture between the Northern Territory (NT) Department of Education and Training and Charles Darwin University.

BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVE OF CONFERENCE:

Covering more than 100 government educational institutions in some of Australia's most remote areas of the Northern Territory, one of the primary objectives of the Centre for School Leadership, Learning and Development is to improve the student learning outcomes of the Territory's young people.

Innovative and cutting edge learning programs have been established to assist with the high quality professional learning and development and activities for school leaders, inspiring them and their communities.

With more than 60% of participants residing outside the greater Darwin area, the decision was made to focus on the evolution of technology in the classroom. The 2011 annual conference was designed to expose Northern Territory School Principals, Assistant Principals and Senior Department Heads to the latest trends first hand, and become role models amongst their own staff.

Not only was it the first time the NT Department of Education and Training had run a completely paperless conference, it is believed to be the largest paperless conference of this scale ever held in the education field within Australia.

Each participant was provided with an electronic tablet for the duration of the three-day event. Participants were encouraged to utilise them during the sessions and in the evening to gain a better understanding of their students needs by engaging in social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and the like.

Susan Bowden, Director of The Centre for School Leadership, Learning and Development said the rationale was to allow the School Leaders' to embrace this modern culture both in and out of the workplace environment.

"Initially, we were concerned that it would be 'off-putting' for the speakers to have limited 'eye-contact' during the sessions, but it was the totally the reverse. It was inspiring to see everyone fully engaged using the personal devices. Keynote speakers tailored their presentations to include interactive web-based content that prompted discussion for whoever the participants were sitting next to. There was a buzz of energy in the auditorium," she said.

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW:

The initial promotional of a paperless conference concept was a big drawcard for the School Leaders. Registration was a breeze, with all delegates 'logging-in' via a bank of computers on arrival at the Darwin Convention Centre.

As a large number of participants were from remote Northern Territory communities, a networking day, prior to

the conference, was specifically planned to allow participants to orientate themselves with the electronic devices and ideas on how they could incorporate into their 'day-to-day' classroom education.

The Centre for School Leadership, Learning and Development, Senior Consultant - Workforce Development and 2011 annual conference organiser, Donna Murray said, "who would have thought that technology would become the 'ice-breaker'!"

"The interaction was excellent. It prompted discussion, increased support, stimulated knowledge sharing, and really got people talking to each other," she added.

Other conference first's included; a dedicated 'Conference App' with up-to-the-minute conference schedule; a 'Time Capsule App' that individuals could save favourite presentations, create remarks, follow-ups and reminders into their e-calendars; 'Rapid Download' Sessions, chat rooms and a conference survey.

"We found there was so much enthusiasm and interest in the devices. Many School Leaders' were discussing ways they could purchase complete classroom sets to be utilised for each individual student," commented Susan Bowden, Director of the Centre of School Leadership, Learning and Development.

DARWIN CONVENTION CENTRE EXPERIENCE:

The Centre for School Leadership, Learning and Development had nothing but praise for the professionalism of the Darwin Convention Centre's Team.

"By holding the event at the Darwin Convention Centre, we were able to increase our attendance by over 100 participants and join with the Northern Territory Joint Council of Professional Teaching Association, on the last day. We could not have done that without this world-class facility," she added.

Due to the complexity of the technology needs during the planning and preparation of the event, the Conference Organising Committee undertook several extensive venue site inspections and operational meetings of more than 20 people at a time.

"Our logistical requirements were quite demanding, the Darwin Convention Centre teams were more than accommodating, courteous, helpful and always available to assist in answering our constant barrages of questions," commented Donna.

Another much talked about highlight for attendees from remote communities was the full-time 'Coffee Barista', sponsored by one of the technology suppliers for the duration of the event.

GREATEST ACHIEVEMENTS:

The 2011 Conference Focus was on quality teachers, quality leaders, strong engaged communities, quality strategies and support and innovation and outcomes.

The 'Rapid Download' Sessions, a type of technology-style 'speed-learning', was a great success. Featuring multiple topics structured for remote distance education, attendees were given the choose six-minute presentations on their chosen subjects.

Some of the areas of interests were:

- **@School NT** - an innovative state-of-the-art virtual schooling program with 21st Century learning concepts with 24/7 access
- **New style Video-Conferencing** - involving instant messaging, desk-top sharing and document collaboration, multi-party voice and video calling and more
- **ePathways** - online courses for remote Indigenous middle and senior learners initially targeting 20 of NT's growth towns
- **ESP/SMI** - electronic management of students records and enabling parents/guardians to keep informed of child's performance and development
- **RivusTV** - video streaming with the ability to deliver live and archived videos adding a major dimension to learning experience.

CHALLENGES:

"Our greatest challenge was to change behaviour and challenge thought by introducing a range of technology options into the 'day to day' classroom learning activities," said Susan Bowden, Director of the Centre of School Leadership, Learning and Development.

This was achieved by providing a safe and secure environment for the NT's most respected School Leaders' to experiment and try something new and different, exchange ideas and implement these educational tools into today's workplace practices.

CLIENT QUOTES:

"The flexibility of this world-class venue allowed us to achieved record attendance, more than 100 from the previous year."

Donna Murray, Senior Consultant - Workforce Development, The Centre for School Leadership, Learning and Development

"Due to the enormous technology needs, our logistical requirements were quite demanding. The Darwin Convention Centre sales and operational teams were more than accommodating, courteous, helpful and always available to assist in answering our constant barrages of questions."

Donna Murray, Senior Consultant - Workforce Development, The Centre for School Leadership, Learning and Development

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For further information or comment, please contact:

Ms Carrie Altamura
Business Development Manager
Darwin Convention Centre,

GPO Box 735, Darwin NT 0801

T: + 61 8 9823 9000 E: caltamura@darwinconvention.com.au www.darwinconvention.com.au

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