



Union learning wins plaudits at Conference

Learning was a key theme at ATL's annual Conference in Torquay featuring prominently both inside and outside of the Conference hall.

The learning taster sessions organised by ATL's Learning Project Team were, as usual, a big hit with delegates with over 120 attending workshops on various topics.

Derek Kennedy, National Project Coordinator for the Bakers' Union and a specialist in dyslexia amongst adult learners, led a workshop which drew on his own personal experience as a dyslexic learner to give a fascinating insight into the problems those with this learning difficulty face and the coping strategies they employ. Derek's workshop struck a particular chord with Dudley ULR, Mike Kelley: "Derek's dyslexia workshop was the highlight of the Conference for me." Mike is now planning to offer members in the West Midlands the opportunity to attend one of Derek's workshops this term.

The challenge of successfully integrating Polish children into schools was the subject of a workshop delivered by Magda Koscielak,

Community Development Worker from Devon Primary Care Trust. Magda focused on a number of key issues including the specific nature of the Polish education system and common teaching methods, specific problems facing children and parents when they arrive, and practical steps teachers and support staff can take to aid their transition. Magda's workshop went down well with delegates. "A fascinating taster of the Polish education system and an insight into Polish people's experiences," said one member, whilst another found it to be "a really interesting account of the Polish education system."

Delegates also flocked to a Managing Challenging Behaviour seminar led by Fiona Hallett and Alexis Moore from Edge Hill University. The workshop explored common behaviour syndromes, motivation and self esteem, in addition to tried and trusted methods that can be implemented in the classroom to improve behaviour. Elsewhere, Hannah Essex, from the Teacher Support Network, explored the issue of teacher health and wellbeing, with practical tips on time management and managing stress.

Meanwhile, Conference heard from Bromley-based ULR, Diana Manville, and Bobbie Churchley, a ULR from Brighton and Hove, who together put forward a successful resolution to promote Learning Networks designed to coordinate learning opportunities across regions, thereby enabling members to get more involved and active around learning. Conference was also asked to support Diana's proposal for a Skills Bank, an innovative concept that pools the talents and expertise of ATL members to offer learning opportunities for other members.

But Diana's commitments at Conference were not finished as she

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later hosted a Learning fringe event, which featured a presentation from Dr Peter Townley on the ATL/Edge Hill University partnership and the various options available to members in order to gain accreditation for their CPD.

Diana also spoke passionately at the event about her commitment to union learning and the activities of London Wide, a learning network which has enabled over 200 members to take advantage of a range of opportunities, including Voicecare, behaviour management and ICT. She was also keen to emphasise the benefits of union learning as part of wider attempts to engage and involve members in branch activities. "Because ULRs are in dialogue and have a relationship with members, lots of benefits accrue. Value is added to lives (not just pay!), the strength of the Union is utilised across all sectors and branches can be helped and rejuvenated," said Diana. Developing people within the Union promotes activism, a stronger union, stronger supported and supportive professionals and a better deal for the consumers of education.



On the fringe: ATL ULRs turn out in force to celebrate learning.

ULR breaking down barriers

Being a ULR can be a difficult task but Jane Jackson from Bristol has brought a level of commitment and determination to the role which has enabled her to become a positive force for change, and prove that it is possible to overcome obstacles and promote lifelong learning in the workplace.

Jane, a teaching assistant at Westbury-on-Trym Primary School, completed her ULR training in Bristol last year but was disappointed to find that, on her return to school, members of her senior management team did not share her enthusiasm.

"When I first began on my journey to become a ULR I was looking forward to it. To be able to promote training/learning amongst my colleagues seemed to be such a positive thing to be involved in," explained Jane. "But it didn't go quite according to plan. Unfortunately, I experienced apathy and negative reactions from senior management to begin with."

Despite this early setback, Jane remained firmly committed to developing union learning and following a visit from Learning Organiser, Sandra Berry, her efforts began to make a difference. "Things began to change after a visit to my school from Sandra. It seemed to endorse my role and gave me much needed encouragement and strengthened my resolve," said Jane. "I had a meeting with support staff and explained my role and asked them to fill in a learning needs survey to help me identify their needs. It became clear that there was a need for training in behaviour management so I approached the headteacher and explained what the survey had

shown and she agreed to fund a full day's training. As a result, I have arranged someone to come into school and train all support staff in September."

Jane recognises the importance of meeting the needs of all members of the school workforce and is taking steps to ensure all staff can take advantage of learning opportunities at work. She said: "I recently attended a full staff meeting and gave a short presentation on the role of a ULR and again asked staff if they would fill in a learning needs survey." Jane's commitment to union learning is now providing new and exciting opportunities for colleagues to improve their work-life balance with over 20 members of staff signed up to attend a cookery workshop at the Bordeaux Quay Cookery School.

Her success so far speaks volumes for her persistence and determination. Jane's efforts to establish union learning in her school mean that her colleagues can look forward to more learning opportunities in the future. Sandra, who supports ATL ULRs in the South West, is delighted with her achievements and paid this tribute: "Jane has worked hard to get her role understood by her colleagues and management but has pulled it off through commitment and patience. Jane is a real supporter of her colleagues and the school, and even attended a recent ATL course to support a colleague."

For those ULRs who feel that promoting learning is an uphill struggle, Jane had this piece of advice: "if you are bumping into brick walls my advice is keep bumping, eventually you will break through. Every Child Matters and so does every member of staff!"

ATL joins in the tributes to union learning

ATL President, Julia Neal, and Worcestershire ULR, Stephen Baker, joined Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, John Denham MP and TUC General Secretary, Brendan Barber, for a reception hosted by Unionlearn to celebrate the achievements of union learning reps.

John Denham paid tribute to the work of over 18,000 ULRs across the country calling them a: "fantastic success story, which is making a real difference." He added: "Unions changing lives doesn't seem to have a shred of exaggeration in it at all."

Julia Neal fully endorsed the Secretary of State's comments and also recognised the contribution of ATL's network of ULRs to increasing learning opportunities for our members. She said: "ATL is delighted that ULRs throughout the country have opened up educational opportunities to their members. ATL's community of ULRs also shares their commitment to lifelong learning, and have done a fantastic job promoting learning in their workplaces and branches."



Deep in conversation (from left): John Denham (Secretary of State), Stephen Baker (Worcester ULR), Mark Holding (Head of Recruitment and Organisation) and Julia Neal (ATL President).

Learning well worth the effort for Hertfordshire ULR

As increasing numbers of ATL members benefit from more opportunities to get on, it is important to recognise the hard work from ULRs that takes place behind the scenes to ensure learning events are successful.

Recently, the efforts of Hertfordshire ULR, Dave Forbes, have made a difference as he pulled out the stops to organise a Learning Saturday for members in the branch. *You Learn* managed to catch up with Dave to find out more!

"As a peripatetic Music teacher employed by Hertfordshire Music Service and an ATL ULR (trained in 2004) I have tried to organise courses for all ATL members, of which there are about 3,000. Encouraged by Becky Wright, our Learning Organiser, I embarked on what turned out to be one of the most successful events the branch has offered," Dave explained. "I began with a survey; using hardcopies sent to all members with our termly bulletin and online via SurveyMonkey.com. A visit to the local extended school, which I had used before as a venue, quickly produced an appropriate date (1 March) and hours of brainstorming resulted in *ATL Herts Learning Saturday* as a title!"

There is obviously a big difference between having a basic idea on paper and seeing it translated into tangible learning opportunities for members and, as Dave soon realised, there was much more to do. Dave said: "Then came the

hard bit, getting the providers! Kate Quigley and Becky put me in touch with someone to talk about challenging behaviour from an academic/research-based perspective and the local FE College provided me with some Interactive Whiteboard Training.



On the fringe: ATL ULRs turn out in force to celebrate learning.

A colleague at the extended school promised to involve everyone in a Steel Pans session, and, after lunch, Becky organised a session on *Being an ATL Rep*, with VoiceCare to provide one of their well-proven sessions to round off the day."

Armed with an organised programme of events, Dave set to work contacting members. Dave said: "As the midnight oil was burnt, the jigsaw was assembled and invitations prepared and sent out. Initially, all those who had returned their learning needs survey were invited, but as replies did not flood

in, the audience was widened to all of St Albans (the venue town), but with about a week to go and only six positive replies, we emailed members using etelligent. It was this final method of communication which did the trick because, lo and behold, the event

became viable. Breathing a sigh of relief, I completed the final arrangements, sorted out lunch and waited for the day."

If Dave was a little apprehensive in the run up to *Learning Saturday*, he needn't have been as the event was hugely successful. "In total, 22 members, a mix of Secondary and Primary school teachers and support staff, men and women (well, one man!) accepted the invitation Dave said. "As always, there were some no shows and the final numbers were 18 attendees

on the day, with a maximum session number of 12. This turned out to be perfect, and a good time was had by all, especially the steel pan session. It came in under the £400 budget (just!) and the feedback has been very positive. Hopefully we've got a couple of new ULRs and maybe a rep out of it. And maybe even the start of an ATL Herts Steel Pan Club! You never know.

If you would like any detailed information about the event, please contact Dave at: info@herts.atl.org.uk.

ULRs tackle behaviour concerns

ATL ULRs are increasingly joining forces to support learning and development across several branches.

In the North West, 35 members from Wirral, Cheshire and North Wales had their ULRs to thank for organising a Saturday seminar and workshop on Managing Challenging Behaviour at the Gateway to Wales Hotel, near Chester.

ULRs, Jeff Bevan, Stuart Hart and Maxine Bradshaw secured the services of Fiona Hallett, Senior Lecturer from Edge Hill University and a specialist in behavioural issues in mainstream

schools.

Fiona led an interesting and practical seminar with key topics including common behaviour syndromes, assessing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and the importance of self esteem.

Wirral ULR, Jeff Bevan, told *You Learn* that the feedback on the workshop was excellent and he was delighted so many members had decided to come along on a Saturday. He said: "Holding an event on a Saturday was always going to ask a lot of members, but we were pleased so many wanted to attend."

Union learning works for students

February saw ATL student members turning out in force to attend a series of briefings and workshops designed to give them an all important edge when it comes to securing their first teaching post.

This was the second year running that final year students from the Universities of Cumbria and the West of England were able to get some practical advice to support their own job hunting efforts, and well over 200 took the opportunity

to attend. South Gloucestershire ULR, Carolyn Dutton, and Cumbria ULR, Viv Sealby, worked hard to organise the event and were on hand to ensure



'Words of wisdom: ATL students gather to get the inside track on job hunting.'

everything ran smoothly on the day. Both put together an informative and

enjoyable programme, which covered the key issues and challenges facing final year students.

University of Cumbria students heard from Elizabeth Holmes, who has written extensively for various publications on the challenges facing student and newly qualified teachers, particularly around the issues of applying for jobs, joining a school and working through induction. A local headteacher and Chair of Governors were also on hand to take questions and offer advice as experienced recruiters of newly qualified teachers in the branch.

Viv was delighted with the response from the students and is looking forward to offering more of the same next year.

You Learn round up of regional activity

Support staff members in **Rotherham and Cumbria** are set to benefit from specific behaviour management training, organised by their ULRs. Senior lectures from **Edge Hill University** will lead a workshop at **Rawmarsh School** in Rotherham whilst **Team Teach** will be offering another one of their courses for **Cumbria support staff**.

Park Lane Keighley College ULR, Richard Ward, will be offering members across **West Yorkshire** branches the chance to brush up on their ICT skills. During the summer term members will be able to choose from various courses offered using the College's own ICT facilities.

Elsewhere, **Wakefield** ULR, Janice Lunn, is hoping to offer members the opportunity to complete the British Sign

Language Level 1 from September. Fifteen ATL members from the branch will complete the course this term and Janice is keen to offer a further course to any members who are interested.

Meanwhile, members in **Worcestershire**, will be able to sample some water sports. ULR Stephen Baker has organised introductory courses in sailing, canoeing and windsurfing.

FE learning rep targets stress

ATL members at City of Bristol College are set to benefit from a series of workshops designed to reduce stress and improve wellbeing. College ULR, Dawn May, is using Adult Learners week in May to promote Union learning and will be offering members the opportunity to learn new skills, as well as take time out of the classroom for some well deserved rest and relaxation. Members can look forward to sampling aromatherapy, massage, health and beauty workshops, cookery classes and French Plait techniques.

If you are interested in training as a ULR please contact:

Michael Cheetham on 07918 195894,

email mcheetham@atl.org.uk or **Kate Quigley** on 020 7782 1558, email kquigley@atl.org.uk.

Dates for your diary

If you would like to join ATL's growing network of ULRs, we are offering members the opportunity to attend one of our accredited training courses in either Sheffield or Cheltenham. This three-day course will take place on **5-6 June** with the final day on **18 July**.

If you are interested in attending the Sheffield course, please contact Michael Cheetham by email at: mcheetham@atl.org.uk. Alternatively, if you are interested in attending the Cheltenham course, please contact Sandra Berry by email at: sberry@atl.org.uk.



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