

An un-conference unlike anything else

As learning changes for our students, teachers are also exploring meaningful ways that harness the power of connections and conversations. One such opportunity is EduCampNZ, an e-learning un-conference, writes Fiona Grant.

EduCampNZ is an open, participant-driven event which began as an after school get-together of teachers, keen to share and learn from each other. In 2011, they have become Saturday events, locally hosted and organised.

Why the un-conference format?

This format works for EduCampNZ because participants respond to the opportunity to connect face-to-face with like-minded professionals who attend because they choose to. While many participants are connected through social media and use the likes of Twitter and blogging to extend their professional learning networks, EduCampNZ is also local and provides a flexible, cost-effective option for professional learning across school sectors.

“ One of my hopes for helping organise was to have people from across the education sector talking, often our picture of each other is determined by the label. Once in the room, with shared interests, challenging topics, new learning...labels faded. We were all just educators wanting to learn from each other.

TIM KONG,
SEATOUN SCHOOL

”

Pulling together on the day

Participants are encouraged to use their networks to spread the word and 'bring a friend'. These types of professional learning events reflect Hagel, Brown and Davison's concept of the "power of pull". How can we achieve our potential and help others do the same?

While the agenda for EduCampNZ is created on the day, the wiki and Twitter are used to connect and share potential topics. Participants are invited to add their details and ideas to the wiki leading up to the event. The day begins with an opportunity for anyone attending to suggest sessions for the agenda using 'Speed Geeking' or a 'Smackdown'. Both activities are fast paced and enable ideas, questions and suggestions to be shared quickly. This is also effective in putting a face to some of those pseudonyms and avatars you may have only connected with online. The agenda for the remainder of the day is up to the participants.



“ A highlight of the day for me was the success of the format – everyone driving their own agendas, with plenty of variety but also key themes, such as digital citizenship. That pulled people together.

KAREN MELHUISE,
E-LEARNING CONSULTANT AT
CORE EDUCATION

”

EduCampWelly

The most recent event, EduCampWelly, was held in May and organised by local educators: @virtuallykaren; @timoslimo; @widged; @dragonsinger57; and @ednz. Participants identified many highlights including the student contributions to discussions and presentations. Teacher, Tim Kong and student, Zuni Preece shared valuable insights from their unique perspectives as both learners and teachers. Participants have shared their blog posts, resources links and images online (goo.gl/a8Fms).

“ I loved the informality of the day and being inspired by others...we didn't have to stop a conversation just because it was the end of a session.

JO FOTHERGILL,
RAUMATI BEACH SCHOOL

”

Future local events have also been posted on the EduCampNZ wiki. For those keen to organise an un-conference event the wiki is open and participants are invited to use any of the activities and resources from previous events. Each event also has its own Twitter #tag or follow @EduCampNZ for updates. ▲

FIONA GRANT IS TEAM LEADER E-LEARNING AT TEAM SOLUTIONS.

LIFE IN A DAY: EDUCAMPNZ 2010

See how 70 educators participated and contributed to a day of learning, links and laughs at Summerland School last year.



educampnz.
wikispaces.com