

Collaboration between SCILT and North Ayrshire Council's Family Learning Team

I am a Professional Development Officer at Scotland's National Centre for Languages (SCILT) based at the University of Strathclyde. With a view to potential collaboration through a 'Professional Learning Partnership', I initially approached both the 1+2 Languages Team and the Family Learning Team in May 2017 with a proposal for a French project with a parental engagement/family learning focus. As a result of this, I met the Development Officer for 1+2 and the Lead Officer for Family Learning to discuss further the possibility of working in partnership together to promote learning French among families in North Ayrshire schools.

From a North Ayrshire perspective, I was already aware that the 1+2 Team had a focus on increasing family learning and parental engagement in language learning. Prior to the project however, I had no experience of working with the Family Learning Team. I was aware that the Family Learning Team was involved in working with almost all schools in North Ayrshire and had established effective ways of working with families across the authority on a range of learning opportunities. The Family Learning Team has a strong presence on social media and I was interested in the many ways the team engaged with families and communities. For this reason I was particularly keen to approach the Family Learning Team to see if they would be able to support the project given their expertise around engaging families. Both partners within North Ayrshire confirmed that they were keen to work with SCILT to develop this innovative pilot project.

In the process of identifying a particular school to pilot the project, we were guided very much by the advice of the Family Learning Team who had detailed knowledge of the schools in the area and were able to identify schools where there were already strong pre-existing relationships between the Family Learning Team worker and families and school staff. Schools were invited to express an interest in this pilot project via email and Springside Primary School was chosen as our pilot school. As well as the reasons mentioned earlier, the school demonstrated a strong community ethos within the school and surrounding community of Springside and the Head Teacher was supportive of the project.

Following this initial planning stage, the 'Wee Famille' partners met regularly to fully discuss implementation and develop programme content, with SCILT and North Ayrshire's 1+2 Team working to identify language learning opportunities, as well as exciting and engaging ways to deliver the language, and the Family Learning Team advising on the best way to work with and engage families in the project.

Overall, the impact on parents/carers can perhaps be summarised as:

- Increased confidence in ability to learn French / help their children with French learning,
- Increased parental engagement / participation in Family Learning opportunities at Springside (with an average of 40% attendance each week & a large group attending follow-up activities e.g. Parent-Led Walking Group)

The collaboration between North Ayrshire Family Learning Team and SCILT has been an extremely fruitful one, and the Wee Famille team are already planning for future collaboration and showcasing of the project. I would very much welcome the opportunity to work with the Family Learning Team on another occasion.

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