



Auckland Literacy Association Newsletter – Term 3 2016

Dear ALA Members and Friends,

Welcome to our third newsletter for 2016. If you have any queries or comments please let us know. Our contact details are available on www.nzla.org.nz, under the Councils page.

President's Report

Hello everyone,

The term is rushing by and I know you have all been busy.

I am sure everyone who attended our recent seminar with **Professor Stuart McNaughton** and his colleagues from the **Woolf Fisher Research Centre** were suitably impressed with the level of inquiry and research into the inspiring literacy teaching and learning that is happening across New Zealand. We look forward to further discussions around how this will be used to ensure greater consistency across the education system.

We have a few housekeeping matters around registering and paying for events with **Auckland Literacy Association**. It is important that you or your school send back a registration form filled in with names and numbers of people attending to akldlitassoc@gmail.com, so we know exactly which school, and/or individuals are attending. If your school makes a payment online it is essential that the name of the individual and/or the school is included in the 'Reference' line. Sometimes we have payments for registrations and we have no idea who they are from.

Coming up soon:

The 35th NZLA Conference, 'Navigating Literacies' September 25-28th being held in the beautiful **Bay of Islands**. We will be sharing ideas and feedback from our sponsorship winners later in Term 4. If anyone is still interested in going please click on the link below:

<http://www.nzla.org.nz/249/pages/144-2016-conference-home>



Look out for information for the Auckland Literacy Association ***‘Young Authors and Illustrators’*** day, **October 28th at Te Papapa School**. This is a fun learning workshop where creative writers and illustrators learn about creating stories and books with an author and an illustrator. Numbers are limited so register as soon as the flier arrives in your mail box.

Kind Regards

Bronwyn Wilkinson

President Auckland Literacy Association



The Executive Council celebrating with Heather Bell on becoming an Officer of the Order of Merit.



Research and policy directions: Literacy from early childhood through to year 13

Presentation to Auckland Literacy Association

10th August 2016

Presenters

Stuart McNaughton, Chief Education Scientific Advisor; Woolf Fisher Research Centre. Discussing system issues.

Aaron Wilson and Rebecca Jesson, Woolf Fisher Research Centre. Discussing Manaiakalani.

Stuart outlined three system growing pains:

- Solving sensitive developmental phases that he described as partly a coherence issue and partly thinking through what is the most effective instruction.
- The need for more consistency and less variability.
- Content specialisation.

Transitions

He reminded us that through all transitions in schooling we must know and respect the role of community and family in the life of the child.

- *Early childhood education*
- → *Transition to school years 1-8 (and within this band the instructional shifts that take place through years 4-8)*
- → *Transition to secondary school (and maintenance of engagement during the transition during years 9-13).*

Manaiakalani

Rebecca and Aaron shared how a community has been involved in the Manaiakalani Community of Learners (CoL): using chrome books and evaluating and developing their use from the early years to secondary school.

Within this there have been challenges. Students' progress in reading levelled off after year 6. The movement from 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn' is an oversimplification. Students need to grasp there is a progression in literacy from describe → explain → analyse → critique. Within this there are many complex factors that come into play during reading such as:

- The literacy domain – English
- Specialised subject language



- Cognitive demands of the reading; the number of characters and the interplay of those characters, settings and events

How we scaffold the task is the challenge: not too much or too little support but getting it just right is essential.

Rebecca and Aaron discussed **affordances** and how teachers are using digital environment in ways that are powerful.

They found:

- Efficiency (more time on task).
- Work was more interesting, purposeful and interesting.
- It promoted deeper reasoning (with evidence)
- Risk taking was encouraged.
- Opportunities were provided for digital and face-to-face talking and a window into others' thinking.
- Powerful teaching conversations occurred and teachers were more knowledgeable about what students could do. The task complexity supported opportunities for reading and writing, for synthesis and evaluation through creating digital learning objects (DLO). The student was the expert.

They discussed using multiple texts for providing such opportunities as

- Synthesis and comparison
- Facilitation of deeper understanding and transfer
- Building necessary background knowledge
- Understanding key ideas

Teaching tensions

1) *"If I increase the depth of engagement students have with complex texts I'll have to sacrifice the range of texts the students have access to."*

To overcome this, multiple texts were linked by topic, theme, and feature of language or literature to develop transferable reading knowledge.

2) *"As there is so much information on the web, a digital environment where everyone is an assumed expert, it is necessary to develop critical literacy skills."*

Communication, in-site and onsite, is an essential. Collaboration, connections and visibility are all part of this digital environment for appropriately paced, contingently scaffolded digital tasks that allow increased student response over time to take place.

Issues in NZ education

Stuart returned to talk further on the issue of variable outcomes between schools.

Variability issues



- In high socio-economic schools, children are 4 times more likely to reach National Standards after a year at school compared to a decile 1 school.
- It's not whether Reading Recovery is effective, it's how to ensure Reading Recovery is effective in variable environments.

Variability occurs through

- Contextual variation
- Conditions of local school autonomy, broad aspirations curriculum, history of local initiatives (teachers problem-solve in silos).
- Teacher's actively reconceptualising new practices.
- New Zealand schools' "programme addiction." We keep adding more programmes and have a reliance on them.

Stuart asked, "Can we solve these constraints at a national level?" then finished saying, " There are elephants in many rooms." He asked, "Do we need better public service targets? Or specialist teachers from the middle primary through to the end secondary school?"

Review

It's only 100 words! Julia Skinner. Literacy Forum, volume 13, no3, 2015.

Reviewed by Barbara Strong (RTLB)

I have planned to promote this inclusive writing strategy for several months and have even carried this issue of Reading Forum to the UK and back. The author reflects that writing continues to be hard for students. She suspects that children see it as "boring, irrelevant for the future and who reads it anyway". However when blogging enters the picture there is an audience. The author recommends the 100 word challenge (100wc.net) and its sister challenge the five sentence challenge. A prompt of a few words or a picture is posted and children produce a creative piece of writing. Once this is posted a team of volunteers leave a supportive comment. Students who post a blog are expected to read and comment on at least two other pieces of writing, so more reading and writing is generated.

One young teacher I am working with has told me that it has been great for my case student, and others like him, as they think 100 words is not too much to write. Equally it has been good for the more able writers, as it is a challenge for them to be succinct and get their message across in only 100 words.

There is a role for all of us to play, as well. This initiative needs a team of volunteers for providing feedback on the various posts.



Student Writing

Poetry writing is never as easy as it seems, and there are so many different forms that as a way of expressing our emotions poetry is really great. Here is a delightful poem about mothers - the inspiration came from the writer's own mother. What a wonderful expression of gratitude that all mothers everywhere can enjoy.

They fly high in the sky so you can try.

They get low on their knees so you can feel the breeze.

They protect you from harm and are also quite the charm.

They are the queen above all, but be prepared because one day they'll fall.

You'll be alone. No one will lend, but I guess you'll just have to bend.

A mother is in your laugh, On the street,

In your heart, within a beat.

By Zayyaan (9 years old) at Rosebank School

Looking Ahead...

Keep an eye out for our final event of 2016:

Term 4: Young Authors and Illustrators Workshop featuring Susan Brocker and Dave Gunson – 28 October

This event is only open to member schools so check your school is a member. Membership forms are available from www.nzla.org.nz . Click on Councils – Auckland.