

Promoting the Key Competencies through Primary School Libraries

A summary of ideas shared at workshop at Turning Heads
SLANZA Conference 2009

Introduction: In 2002 the government ordered a curriculum stock-take to see how well the curriculum was meeting the needs of New Zealand youngsters. This identified a number of difficulties and led to a Curriculum review. A draft document was produced 2006 and in 2007 the NZ Curriculum was launched.

Elements of the Curriculum document include:

- The Vision: What we want for our young people - young people who will be confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners.
- 8 Principles – foundations for decision making
- 8 Values – to be encouraged, modelled and explored
- 5 Key Competencies – capabilities for living and life long learning
- 8 Learning Areas: English, Arts, Technology, Mathematics and Statistics, Science, Social Sciences, Health and PE, Learning Languages.
- Recognition of 3 official languages – English, Te Reo Maori and NZ Sign

Key ideas

Programmes of learning need to be student centred. Allows schools to develop their own curriculum. Schools can select from Achievement Objectives in response to identified needs and interests of students

Schools are expected to review their curriculum programmes to ensure that they

- reflect a shared vision
- are securely based on the underlying principles and values
- develop the key competencies
- are relevant to the needs and interests of our students

An inquiry approach to learning (and teaching) is integral.

The Key Competencies.

These can be considered both the goals of learning and the keys to successful learning in every learning area. They are regarded as capabilities for living and lifelong learning, which are woven through all the different learning areas and experiences. They are complex and develop over time.

We identified the following characteristics of the Key Competencies

T = Thinking involves

- Involves using intellectual curiosity and problem solving to construct knowledge

R = Relating to others involves

- Interacting
- Listening
- Recognising diversity
- Collaboration in learning
- Co-operating
- Competing fairly

- Negotiation
- Compassion
- Developing empathy

U = Using language, symbols and texts involves

- Interpretation: how language is represented
- Communication: how to, and how they respond
- Application: what is actually done to demonstrate the above

M = Managing self involves

- Being self-motivated
- Being organised
- Perseverance
- Becoming a reflective

P = participating and contributing involves

- Having a sense of belonging
- Being confident to participate within new contexts
- Understanding the importance of balancing rights, roles and responsibilities
- Contributing to the quality and sustainability of ones environment
- Making connections and being a group member
- Contributing to community

Working in groups, participants suggested the following ways in which primary school libraries could contribute to the development of the Key Competencies.

Thinking

- Think critically when making choices
- Decide what one is looking for and where to find it
- Evaluate material once found – its usefulness and credibility
- Understand library systems
- Synthesise new information
- Assess usefulness of information
- Go from the general to the particular
- Transfer knowledge or skills to meet a new need
- Formulate rich questions

Relating to others

- Develop a world perspective through the diversity of the print collection and through use of email and internet
- Compare and contrast information from different sources
- Take different roles in group work
- Show respect for the environment and the rights of others
- Respect others opinions
- Share resources and negotiate their use
- Understand the background and context of materials

Understanding language, symbols and texts

- Know where to locate different types of material
- Understand use of Dewey numbers
- Follow user instructions for library tools
- Reading
- Viewing visual texts
- Understand signage
- Sign language, Braille
- Know about different types of texts
- Make use of topic related displays
- Use interactive whiteboard for higher order thinking
- Understand computer interface, internet language, symbols, formats, cues
- Use audio books, DVD, video
- Speakers

Managing self

- Able to search for material independently and effectively
- Co-operate with others
- Stay focussed
- Manage time
- Set goals
- Take responsibility for own learning
- Know when to ask for help
- Behave responsibly
- Care for library resources and return borrowed materials on time

Participating and contributing

- Share work from inquiry process
- Make displays
- Talk about and share resources
- Read to buddies
- Promote books
- Be student librarians
- Make books for younger children
- Make suggestions eg book buying
- Visit other libraries
- Review books
- Organise events to promote books, celebrate cultures etc

Conclusion:

School Libraries are a hugely important resource within primary schools and as such they have enormous potential to support the development of the Key Competencies. They provide an authentic setting in which the Key Competencies can be fostered and applied. This should be taken into account when schools consider how they will foster the Key Competencies.