

Wellington Regional SLANZA meeting and AGM

The guest speaker for the 15 June meeting was Katie Adeane, Ministry of Education Literacy Development Officer. She had been invited to provide an overview of the role the Literacy Development Officers had within schools. Essentially their role is to provide the bigger picture view of literacy as they aim to raise literacy levels across the country. At this stage there are only five officers for New Zealand but their role is to help make links for schools to the wider literacy networks. They do not work in classrooms with teachers, which is the main point of difference from Literacy Advisers. They work with school management, principals and literacy leaders within the schools. The focus is on the management and policy aspects of school leadership so that a supportive environment is being created, conducive to the development of a literacy culture across the school.

There are several approaches the Literacy Officers use to accomplish this. One is to review the school's literacy goals and to make connections with the charter to ensure there is an alignment. This is followed up by helping analyse the school's current student data and providing support for further effective assessment for learning that will inform future decisions for teaching practice. The emphasis is on the point that teaching does make a difference and therefore the evidence must be gathered within the school that will affect that school's teaching practice. School communities are diverse both within the school and from community to community and so development must be customised in a sense for each particular school.

Once the school management review has been completed the Officers assist with a professional development plan that will support further literacy achievement. Some of that professional development might be related to the gathering and analysis of effective data to inform practice for instance.

There was some discussion from the SLANZA members attending concerning the role of the school library within this focus. The Literacy Development Officers do not currently appear to officially acknowledge the school library's role in supporting Literacy. However Katy agreed with the sentiments being expressed and acknowledged that within the Officer's role they could look at the policy development as it related to the school library to ensure that it was in effect able to realise its potential as an essential factor in supporting literacy across the school. There is a role for teachers in charge of school libraries here in actively promoting the benefits of their library for their students. The teacher in charge of the library gathering the evidence that what happens in the library does benefit students. Many teachers are not aware of these connections.

AGM.

There was some discussion regarding the optimum size of the Regional Committee as it appears to be growing. The main issue at this time is to ensure that the committee has some stability as it takes on the organisation of the National Conference in 2007. Conference organisation is already underway.

The following were members were elected for the next term.

Mary Pollock, Sue Easterman, Sue Marshall, Dylan Owen, Sophie Jolliffe, Adaire Hannah, Rosalba Finnerty, Liz Pfahlert, Barbara Walker, Brian Waddell.

Before the conclusion of the meeting Adaire acknowledged the work Janet McFadden had contributed to SLANZA over the years through her various roles. She was presented with a large bouquet of flowers and accompanying acclamation from all present. Janet is standing down from the committee this year. Adaire's enthusiasm and guidance as the Regional Committee's convenor was also warmly acknowledged by all present.

Brian Waddell