

# Auckland Reading Association

Newsletter No. 3 November 2007



## President's report

Term four is always busy. There is much to get through before a hopefully sunny, and relaxing, holiday season. Those of you who were fortunate enough to attend the NZRA annual conference will have seen 'our' Pene Burridge awarded the Citation of Merit – the highest honour conferred by NZRA. Our current Treasurer, Pene has held a number of other positions within the Auckland and Waikato reading associations over the years. Congratulations Pene from the executive, committee and fellow ARA members.

This newsletter will provide a great opportunity to increase your reading mileage! In addition to news from our sponsored teachers who attended the NZRA annual conference, there are reports from Pene Burridge, Heather Bell and I from the international conferences we attended this year. I would also like to congratulate those who organised the highly successful Young Authors and Illustrators Forum. The event coincided with World Literacy Day. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend as I was overseas, but all reports have commented on the enthusiasm of the participants and interaction between the presenters and our future young authors and illustrators. Our programme committee is currently working on ideas for an end-of-year function. Flyers will be sent to schools when this event is finalised.

Go well – and take time to treat yourselves to some 'leisure' reading and writing.

*Leith Matthews*

## Events for 2008

July NZRA annual general meeting  
6 - 9 July New Zealand Reading Association annual conference 2008,  
Hamilton

### Auckland Reading Association events

Term 1	Beginning teachers' day: Setting up your classroom Auckland Reading Association annual general meeting
Term 2	Seminar
Term 3	Seminar
	Beginning teachers expo
Term 4	End-of-year function

# International conference reports

## 15<sup>th</sup> Conference on Reading: Germany, August 2007

*Organised by the International Development in Europe Committee (IDEC)  
and the German Association for Reading and Writing (DGLS)*

The 15<sup>th</sup> Conference on Reading was held at Humboldt University in the former East Berlin. Interestingly, West Berlin had played host to the same conference 17 years ago.

The theme 'Checkpoint Literacy' was aptly named – reflecting both the location of the conference, and the opportunity it provided to review progress in achieving literacy goals in an ever-changing Europe.

Germany's Andreas Schleicher presented an aspiring plenary on '*Literacy Skills in the Information Age*'. He spoke of his association with the PISA International Testing Program and made frequent reference to New Zealand's results and of the country's high global position; a comment that was noted in several other presentations. His presentation is accessible on [ac@pisa.com](mailto:ac@pisa.com).

Allan Luke, a dynamic and entertaining Australian, gave the closing plenary. His topic was, '*What Counts as the Critical Literacy in New Times?*' and he made reference to his most recent work in Singapore.

Throughout the conference, presenters pointed out the contribution that research makes to improving learning and educational processes.

They stressed that an ability to read is a prerequisite for understanding the world and that the written word fundamentally shapes our daily lives. While the pervasion of digital media has not changed this, reading does mean an orientation to an increasingly complex world; where lifelong learning depends on how we understand written content and how we think further, integrating it into familiar and new contexts.

Yetta Goodman and two of her colleagues shared their recent research into '*Constructivist Views of Early Literacy Development*'. They focused on young children's literacy learning and the ethnic, linguistic and cultural variations on literacy development. They explored pedagogy that best supports the literacy development of children in their homes and communities. They also looked at the relationship of this research to the constructivist concepts of language and learning by Piaget, Vygotsky and Halliday.

The presentation titled, '*The Definition of Reading Disability and Dyslexia*' was particularly interesting for its relevance to the current debate in New Zealand and the recently released draft '*Dyslexia Working Definition*'. The presenter suggested two alternative ways to define dyslexia – using the core deficit of phonological processing criterion, or response to intervention (RTI). Both of these ideas are in contrast to those promoted in the New Zealand draft definition of dyslexia.

Similarly, presentations '*Guided Comprehension*' and '*Reading to Learn*' covered ideas for helping students understand what they read. Much of what was offered is considered effective literacy practice in New Zealand schools. '*Reading to Learn*' was emphasised rather than "learning to read". In New Zealand schools, learning to read occurs so that children are able to read to learn, rather than the either/or stance that was suggested by the presenters.

My attendance at this conference was worthwhile, and is an exercise to be recommended to all involved in education.

I attended some memorable presentations. Some affirmed my thinking on current literacy practice in New Zealand, others presented views that although may not be part of our literacy teaching and learning, were worth revisiting to hear what is current practice in other countries.

The organisers are to be commended for achieving the aims set for this conference – to stimulate and promote an interest in literacy, to disseminate knowledge helpful to the solution of literacy problems and to continue to sponsor conferences and workshops.

**Leith Matthews**

## **American Reading Conference: Toronto, May 2007**

### **National testing**

The 2007 American Reading Conference was held in Toronto from May 13-17. The title of one of the presentations was "Say No to High-Stakes Tests". Students in the US are mandated to sit national and state tests. The presenter communicated the negative affects of high-stakes tests on both students and teachers.

#### **National testing in the US: The facts**

- If you don't pass the test you repeat the year
- All children take the test regardless of socio-economic status and standard of English
- All cultures must assimilate
- Teachers are the enemy if children fail
- Exploration learning and creativity are stifled
- Art, music and physical education are pushed out of the curriculum
- No interval breaks for failing schools as that extra time can be used to "drill" children
- Funding and teacher salaries are cut for under-achieving schools

#### **Implications for New Zealand teachers**

- Take student's learning styles into consideration
- Acknowledge and support student's culture and language
- Plan a broad-based and relevant curriculum
- Retain targeted funding for low decile schools
- Monitor low-achieving students and plan for their success
- Oppose national testing

*Pene Burridge*

## **ALEA/AATE National Conference: Canberra, July 2007**

The July weather was crisp, the restaurants diverse and abundant, the accommodation comfortable and walking-distance close to the Australian National University conference venue.

And the ALEA/AATE conference? Well worth the journey! The theme, 'Critical Capital: Teaching and Learning' was most appropriate given the city and the carefully planned programme. The emphasis on critical literacy and reflective practice was strongly evident in most of the sessions I attended.

The magnificent Mem Fox led by example at the Sunday evening welcome. She recommended that participants tell politicians what we want them to do. She advised that we have more knowledge of, and commitment to, education than politicians and that we have a responsibility to make sure that they have accurate information about our issues and concerns.

Michael Apple, the plenary speaker at the official opening at parliament, was fiery with his comments and acerbic in his challenges to understand and resist the rhetoric associated with national high states testing. He urged educators to beware of the ease with which the meanings of words such as 'democracy' and 'participation' can so easily be manipulated without our knowing.

The daily diet of keynote speakers was superb. Many of Australia's finest theorists, researchers, teachers and academics prodded our thinking and fed our minds with rich ideas and stimulating provocation. Sustainability was a major sub theme – whether of commitment to supporting children's learning, focused professional development or environmental resources.

I was privileged to again hear Paul Brock speak. Paul has been afflicted with motor neuron disease but his mind remains sharp, his views thoughtful and challenging, and his love of, and for, his family is inspirational. Paul's keynote address urged us to never lose sight of the critical importance of high-quality literature – no matter how curricula change or fads intervene.

Peter Freebody presented the conference's concluding comments. He left us with ponderings, questions, challenges and a genuine acknowledgement that teachers are, and should be, valued.

I have been attending ALEA conferences for almost 30 years. This conference was one of the best ALEA/AATE conferences I have been to in terms of the quality and breadth of the programme. The learning has been powerful!

**Heather Bell**

## **Sponsored teachers' reports**

***Each year the ARA sponsors two teacher, who are in their first six years of teaching, to attend the NZRA National Conference. The ARA covers the cost of registration, travel and accommodation. This year, Maura O'Shea, of Rosebank School, and Tania Banns, of Woodlands Primary School, were the lucky recipients.***

This year's NZRA National Conference in New Plymouth was three days of meeting teachers from other parts of New Zealand and attending rewarding and entertaining workshops. One of the highlights for me was listening to, and meeting, authors and illustrators. Stu Duvall, the magical storyteller, had his audience in fits of laughter. He shared some of his writing and talked about how to light the reading fire (literally!) for boys. Colin Thompson was hilarious and reminded us of the magic of children's books. He spoke about his own writing process and how stories can come from small ideas – you just need to start writing. Murray Gadd's workshop on quality writing prompted me to think about the features of effective writing, and how I could inspire the children in my class to write. He used children's writing and anecdotes from his own experiences to illustrate his points. The three days of the conference went quickly and I came back excited about putting the new things I had learnt into practice in my classroom. I would like to thank the Auckland Reading Association for the opportunity to attend the conference and I encourage others to apply to be a sponsored teacher for next year in Hamilton.

**Tania Bann**

As a beginning teacher it was an invaluable opportunity to be sponsored to attend the NZRA's 31<sup>st</sup> National Conference in New Plymouth. It was fitting that the opening plenary speaker was Alan Farstrup; executive director of the International Reading Association. He has conducted in-depth research into how reading fluency is measured through such skills as phonemic awareness, vocabulary and, comprehension.

The workshops I selected to attend at the conference were based on the needs I have identified within my classroom. The first workshop, 'Phonemic Awareness – What is it? How do you teach it?' was presented by Carolyn Grace. It was alarming to learn that children who enter school with low levels of phonemic awareness have a 90% chance of failing to learn to read. Carolyn teaches phonemic awareness through different stages. She works with puppets, especially when teaching onsets and rimes, and encourages children to use puppets to interact with their peers when learning.

The second workshop was presented by Annette Stock, a speech language and literacy specialist who is working towards 'Hooking in Reluctant Older Readers'. Annette works alongside a group of low cohort students and is starting to reignite their interest in reading through a range of diverse methods; such as using censored rap music to link rhyming words together.

This is just a snap shot of the professional development I received from attending the 31<sup>st</sup> National Reading Conference this year. Next year the 32<sup>nd</sup> National Reading Conference is in Hamilton. I strongly encourage you apply for the ARA sponsored teacher scholarship so that you can gain the same enriching knowledge that was bestowed upon me.

**Maura O'Shea**

# Young Authors and Illustrators Forum

## Remuera Primary

What if you invited 150 of Auckland's brightest young writers to spend the morning with six of New Zealand's best-known authors and illustrators? The results of this experiment were seen at the Young Authors and Illustrators Forum held at Remuera School on Friday September 8.

The students were given a unique opportunity to gain inside information from the very talented Lucy Davey, Jennifer Beck, Lindy Fisher, Lorraine Orman, Bruce Potter and Ross Kinnaird.

Libby Davey gave the students a preview of her latest picture book, which features lovable feline Fifi La Belle, while Jennifer Beck told the students that being a dreamer is a jolly good thing!

The students were wide-eyed when looking at the illustrations of the talented Fisher, while Orman capitalised on the writing prowess of the students by inviting them to help her write the ending for her next story; a sequel to the popular *Ratso*.

Potter wowed the students (especially the boys) with his illustration of a power-lifting surfer riding an enormous killer shark, while Kinnaird shared his secret to success; his paintbrushes made from the hair of Arctic foxes!

At the end of the day, the chatter in the hall indicated the event was a success. Students came with empty notebooks and left with pages full of ideas and heads full of aspirations. A special thank you must go to Sharon Pond and Rob Southam, who worked tirelessly to organise the day and to the staff and students of Remuera Primary.

*Angela Burt*

## Beginning Teachers' Expo September 2007

Congratulations to **Melanie Sadaraka** and **Mele Vete**, two pre-service teachers, who won a free one-year Auckland Reading Association membership.

## Calling all interested teachers...

At the beginning of next year, the ARA is organising a seminar that aims to assist beginning teachers prepare for the coming school year.

If you are a confident presenter, in your first six years of teaching, and would like to speak at the conference. Please contact Christine Whibley (rtlit@papnormal.school.nz).

## Digital camera for sale

Canon Power shot A40

Any offers accepted

Good for classroom usage

Contact: Pene Burrige

pene.or.keay@clear.net.nz

**Auckland Reading  
Association  
End of Year Function**

**Books, Bites and Bubbles**

**with**

**Jennifer Beck & Lindy Fisher**

**Come and hear these well known producers of  
quality children's  
literature speak about their work**

This is our final ARA event for 2007. It is being offered to Members only and a limited number of seats are available. Registration, payment and confirmation of the receipt of both must occur prior to the event.

**WHERE: Kohia Teachers Centre  
WHEN: Tuesday 27 November 2007  
TIME: 6.30p.m. – 9 p.m.  
COST: \$15.00 per person**

**Please forward names of those attending and  
payment to;**

The Treasurer  
Auckland Reading Association  
P O Box 12 11 11,  
Henderson, Waitakere City

**GET IN EARLY! RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!**

# Auckland Reading Association



## Membership Subscription 2008

Membership is from January to December 2008

<b>Individual Membership</b>	<b>\$45.00</b>
<b>School Membership</b> School membership allows 2 staff to attend seminars at members rates	<b>\$60.00</b>

### Benefits of joining the Auckland Reading Association

Automatic membership to New Zealand Reading Association  
Personal mailings of meetings  
Issues of the ARA newsletter and NZRA Forum  
Reduced registration for seminars and NZRA National Conference

Please post your completed membership form and cheque to:

**The Treasurer**  
**Auckland Reading Association**  
**PO Box 12 1111**  
**Henderson Auckland**

*Cheques made payable to: Auckland Reading Association*

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## 2008 Membership Subscription

Membership	Please Tick
Individual Membership (\$45.00)	
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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Email: \_\_\_\_\_