

NASDAP Newsletter Term 3 2000

REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT OF NASDAP

Dear Colleagues,

Please read the information on the postal ballot regarding the NASDAP constitution and return your response as soon as possible – today?? We need to make these small changes to the constitution to become an incorporated society. There was very strong support from the members at the Dunedin conference that we should be an incorporated society for the protection of everyone involved. We need 20% of schools to support the changes before we can apply for incorporation. We will ask you to specify the senior managers covered by your school's NASDAP membership when accounts come out with the Term 4 newsletter.

Nominations for NASDAP executive for the next 2 years will be called for in Term 4. There will be a nomination form in that newsletter. Elections will be held after that, if necessary, in specific areas.

The present executive and the area they represent are:

Roy Fletcher, Otamatea High School Northland	Region 1 Upper, Central and Lower
Julia Scott, Onehunga High School Mahurangi to	Region 2 Auckland (South of
Carol Lloyd, Takapuna Grammar School Counties/Manukau)Counties/Manukau)	Region 2
Leslie Jamieson, Hamilton Girls' High School Thames Valley	Region 3 Waikato, King Country,
Allan Webb, Tauhara College Bay of Plenty	Region 4 Western Bay of Plenty,
Bruce Smith, Napier Boys' High School	Region 5 East Coast, Hawkes Bay
Phil Keenan, Stratford High School Manawatu/Wanganui	Region 6 Taranaki,
Jenny Thomas, Kapiti College Wairarapa	Region 7 Wellington, Hutt Valley,
Margot Crate, Nayland College Marlborough	Region 8 West Coast, Nelson,
Lynlee Smith, Geraldine High School	Region 9 Canterbury, Aoraki

Please read the article from New Zealand Education Review reprinted here on computers. It would be good to have feedback from schools on the types of models being developed; the points of view with computer suites vs. geographical spread and the tension with the IT teachers between professional development, teaching and technical back up.

Finally, having been one of a few schools in New Zealand put on a so called black list because of our stance on NCEA, (incidentally our stance is no different than that taken by almost 300+ other secondary schools “get informed, find out what we can, reflectively view the changes, realize S.C. and Bursary and 6FC have their faults and flaws”) it does make you wonder about the damage that could be done by ignorant uninformed “dodgy” web pages! WATCH OUT!

Best wishes

Jenny Thomas

NASDAP President

YE OLDE BARRIERS TO LEARNYNG

Some months ago I was given a couple of articles to read. First was by Graeme Aitkin (now the Director Sec. Education at the University of Auckland) given in December 1999 at the NZ Assoc of the teaching of English. The second was by another Auckland academic, Colin Gibbs, on ‘Teacher Effectiveness’. More recently, our local DP/AP association held a long and disturbing session on student behaviour lead by Kevin Knight of Christchurch (NZ Graduate School of Education). In all three cases there was the recurring theme about whether all schools are cutting the mustard / and doing the business / and delivering the goods / and ensuring that teaching and learning takes place.

For various reasons it seems we are not.

Graeme Aitkin focussed on the complex challenges that teachers have to face. He emphasised respect, dignity, tone, and being on task. It made good reading and mirrored the writings of Bill Rogers. Colin Gibbs (speaking to the AARE-NZARE conference in Melbourne last November), was rather more direct. He noted the consequences of the constant flow of change in the last decade and how this had successfully impeded teachers from doing their proper job.

And then, I and several other PPTA acquaintances, were asked to facilitate WorkLoad Seminars. I have come to the unsavoury conclusion that in far too many schools the biggest source of stress and work overload relates to the behaviour of pupils. Why do school administrations condone and eventually accept the constant flow of poor behaviour? Why do they not air their concerns? The real barrier to learning in our classrooms is the unacceptable behaviour of a minority of kids. Kids who think that school should be a fun place, that it is there primarily to socialise, to hassle, to play sport, shoot a few baskets, and generally hang out. We buy into this. We compensate for our lack of rigour in classrooms with some really serious energy in major sporting and cultural events. Should we be stupid enough to audit our own in class

performance, then that would raise some parental fears and we could lose pupils. Instead, we demonstrate to parents how committed we are to their kids, by spending holidays at sporting tournaments, weekends at endless games of netball/rugby/hockey, week nights at play practice. And then we complain that we suffer from over-work.

Schools are first and foremost about teaching and learning. We can not escape that, despite the multitude of temptations. Sure, teaching has changed, but the needs of kids are still constant. Underachievement of boys is topical. Is it because we let them off the hook and are not prepared to force the issue about absenteeism, attitude, dress, homework, being on task? Could be. Why do we no longer insist that they meet certain standards of civilised behaviour? Is it because we may fall out with them, and that anyway, we would prefer to only see and comment on positive aspects of their behaviours?

Trouble is, the new NAGs no longer refer to 'Barriers to Learning'. The 'powers that be', have determined to concentrate on measurement and outcomes and forego the issues of process. Perhaps they think we should 'be moving forward' beyond this quaint notion.

Aitkin, Gibbs, and Knight are all searching for processes to make classrooms places where pupils can guarantee to receive adequate instruction, be stimulated, and to learn. Also, these places to be free from disruption by peers and wasted opportunities to learn. And of course, from teachers who exude inertia or who have low expectations. Schools are schools. This is where teenagers make the transition to be young adults, qualified and ready to take on the world. Regretfully I have come to the conclusion that many of us have lost the way and as a result, there is currently a generation of youngsters who will not be equipped to reach their potential.

Whose problem?

My working class parents bravely thought that a secondary education was the magic bullet to get their kids out of the poverty trap. A secondary education nowadays, does not seem to have the same credibility, the same currency; and that is the pity.

I observed a teacher trainee earlier in the year. After 40 minutes of warm up exercises, group work and games, there was a minor distraction to which he then warned that if 'you didn't behave' then the class would have to do 'some real work in your books'.

No teaching or learning here. Just an attempt to baby-sit some kids for an hour or so. Sorry, but not good enough. He thought that by keeping kids interested or involved, then somehow he was succeeding. A plethora of mini activities, a two minute sound bite from the teacher, a video, some whole class discussion and then the bell, is not a secondary education. But I guess he is not on his own in this, if I read Aitkin, Gibbs and Knight correctly.

John Dunbar, NASDAP Vice-President and SPAC Chairperson

REPORT FROM THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PPTA SENIOR POSITIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SPAC)

The Senior Positions Advisory Committee of PPTA had a recent meeting in Wellington. A SPAC newsletter will be in schools soon but some of the highlights were:

DPs relieving as Principals

Have you noticed that your Principal is away a bit more often recently? CEC 4.15 states that no allowance can be paid to the person acting as Principal unless the period is longer than two weeks. SPAC has advised PPTA that this section should be amended - downwards!

Leave Entitlement

Tony Broad presented a paper on a proposed leave entitlement for teachers to receive time out according to length of service and decile rating of school. It was decided to pursue that matter further and begin a process which would see a Paper at the 2001 PPTA Annual Conference.

‘Deputy and Assistant Principals’

This term disappeared from the CEC some years ago and senior managers, as we became known, were deemed to be just teachers with a bit more to do in the way of responsibility. We are therefore paid a teacher’s salary with some MUs. There is a growing awareness that with the changing roles of Principals, the function of senior managers is also changing, so much so that we are no longer seen as teachers doing a bit extra. SPAC has advised the PPTA that when the next CEC is negotiated, it should include a re-instatement of the notion of a separate salary scale for DPs or APs, or whatever you wish to call yourself. SPAC will put out a questionnaire on this.

Discipline and Pastoral Issues

The PPTA is to produce a booklet on best practice and good ideas. Again, SPAC will seek your assistance on this. Please support this request when it comes because many of us are often at wits end to find workable and effective solutions to new problems which seem to arrive daily.

PS

WORTH THINKING ABOUT!

Interesting to note that the two big winners in the recent Montana Book Awards, Owen Marshall and Grahame Sydney are ex-Secondary School Teachers. Trouble is though, that every other DP and AP who are going to write their memoirs will have the same title as mine: “Life on the Run”.

John Dunbar, NASDAP Vice-President and SPAC Chairperson

CONFERENCE 2001 TE ITI KAHURANGI – EDUCATION MATTERS

Plan to be at the biennial NASDAP conference, to be held in Auckland from Wednesday 1 to Friday 3 August 2001 at Waipuna Lodge.

The conference will offer inspiration for making constructive change in secondary school settings, while acknowledging the political, human and economic constraints.

If your school is involved in an interesting innovation, we'd like to hear about it, as well as any suggestions for speakers and resource people. Proposals for workshops will be called for later this year, and a web-site will be set up closer to the conference time.

Please send inquiries to Conference Committee Chairperson, Shona Smith, Deputy Principal, Waitakere College, Box 21144, Henderson, Waitakere City.