

These national newsletters are produced by the Secondary Student Achievement national facilitation team, as part of supplementary PLD support for schools, from the University of Auckland and Te Tapuae o Rehua consortium.

National Newsletter: Secondary Literacy

Information and resources for Leaders of Literacy in secondary schools | Term 3 2015

Greetings to you all, Kia ora, Kia orana, Fakaalofa lahi atu, Mālō e lelei, Talofa lava, Talofa ni. In this edition – research skills, our guest contributor Mark Dashper on digital literacy for Māori students, and developing ‘spoken paragraphs’.

Developing research skills

The research process involves both sequenced steps and a number of skills including: to evaluate the credibility and worth of the information, and its source; and to summarise what has been read, heard or viewed.

The ability to make a sound, clear summary

This is a useful skill for all of us throughout our lives. *Reading for Understanding* (Schoenbach, Greenleaf, & Murphy, 2012), referred to in our newsletter of term 2, 2014, has several useful ideas in chapter 7 (which is concerned with building a ‘reading toolbox’) about helping students learn to summarise. There are also some basic guides at the [NZCER arbs](#) and at [Literacy Online](#).

Evaluating the reliability and value of found information

The ability to be critically aware of how accurate and/or biased texts are, in all media, is another invaluable life-long skill; and most usefully acquired early. The degree of scrutiny a text will require will vary, and building a finely tuned critical ability takes time. Younger students might usefully learn a ‘quick’ checklist of criteria to apply when judging worth and reliability. For many of us, students included, the Web is a first search ground for information. A neat, 7-point list to evaluate web-sites provided by Quick.org in the UK is available [here](#) and [here](#).

A website by the 21st Century Information Fluency Project, [WSI: Web Site Investigator Information Forensics](#) provides an excellent base-set of questions to apply to any text. The WSI site has several pages of activities: ‘Cases to Investigate’ and ‘Investigator Training’ which may provide engaging learning activities. A deeper and more extensive set of criteria to apply when judging text worth and authority, and which may serve the demands for critical awareness faced by senior students, is offered by Justia Virtual Chase [here](#) in their ‘How to Evaluate Information – Checklist.’

Rosemary Hipkins notes in *Students’ experiences of “researching” in different subjects*, the first of four articles (from Set 1, 2005, NZCER):

“My interest stems from the role research can potentially play in helping to prepare students for their lives beyond school. People who write about important outcomes from twenty-first century school education often focus on the necessity to help students become “lifelong learners” ... It is not difficult to see how supporting students in carrying out their own research could play a key role in developing these elements [of life-long learning].”

To purchase the full text of the article, go to the NZCER website:
<http://www.nzcer.org.nz/nzcerpress/set/articles/students-experiences-researching-different-subjects>

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Using educational social networking for digital literacy engagement with Māori students

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In my current PhD research I have been exploring engagement in educational social networking (ESN) within learning area cohorts of Māori ākonga in a small sample of isolated Northland schools. We built closed Facebook groups for different learning areas, and these were used both in and outside of class for teaching and learning. In terms of digital literacy, what we discovered was a huge e-learning potential for rich learning conversations within the cohorts, which seemed to both fit with Māori values and also perform well on an international e-learning platform as a flipped classroom.

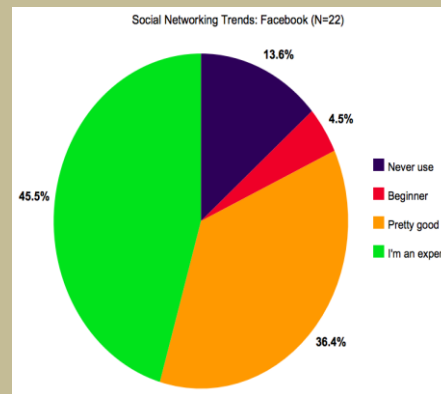
Student involvement in ESNs for their learning areas tended to be both participatory and observational, and group connection and input was easily able to be measured:

1. Participatory – written contributions based on membership of a group activity, measured by liking, commenting, or posting on a topic as part of a learning area discussion, at recorded times.
2. Observational – looking at static images or videos, and reading comments or postings in a discussion, measured by identifiable individual views.

Ākonga responses showed the following trends for designing any ESN to be used as e-learning teaching resources within a learning area:

Action and constraints on action	Student response trends
<i>How do I like to learn?</i>	Social media as an e-Learning tool to use as part of a teaching and learning programme both in and out of the classroom, and as an alternative format to email for assessment submission.
<i>How would I like to be involved?</i>	Participation based - membership of a group activity; and observation based - looking at other people's work online.
<i>Where should change occur and what would challenge me?</i>	The format should be a mixture of online and classroom teaching delivery, where students are free to add material, in an environment accessible within class and outside of school as a secure cohort group.

Teachers acknowledged that some ākonga had a wide choice of immediate whānau to involve in class research projects that can be presented digitally through the ESN, while others may have limited access to kaumātua and kuia. This situation could be made more equitable by ākonga sharing their discussions online, and by gaining approval from elders to use their knowledge in projects and communications within a secure environment. (Continued on next page.)



(Typical cohort use of a preferred SNS)

In a social networking environment, ākonga can maintain control over their 'online life' and cultural wellbeing by ownership of their own profile, group memberships, and postings. This exhibits for Māori ākonga some of the [features](#) of rangatiratanga values for an educational environment.

A connection with whānau and friends, arguably the purpose of social networks such as Facebook, was also a predictably high whanaungatanga value for education.

Teachers were quick to see the potential for literacy engagement and effective ways to use the ESN to support a flipped classroom framework.

"Every kid in my classroom knows how to get onto the ESN already. I'd say to the kids: "Jump on the group ... there's a message I've left. You need to read through that. You can respond in text, or give me a video version of your response." I would add there from me, that they are to gain two or three comments from other students as feedback from their work, as a robust conversation. I can check it out from the ESN." (Teacher interview.)

"I'd like to flip my classroom for the kids as a strategy for my lessons, by sending them material, and maybe video-cam part of my lesson, so they could up-skill themselves the night before. Then I can identify in class those who understand the work and they can carry on digitally, while those that don't – I can work them in class." (Teacher interview.)

One teacher reported that he told his students, "Ask permission to interview whānaunga for the ESN. You have a resource of speakers that are to do with 'things Māori'. Go to Papa so-and-so because that one knows about the kōrero, and another knows about history. It's a rich learning environment. While these people may not be able to be here physically, they can be here on the ESN." (Teacher interview.)

One of the teachers recalled a conversation she had with a senior Māori student over a piece of on-line writing: "Once upon a time, I would look down on people working on SNS. It's like: you're not doing real work, you know? I had a student who'd made a very good posting to a school-based topic on Facebook recently. I said to her "That was a really clear response. Your essays at school that you do . . . you stress about them, but your ability to articulate that issue (on ESN), you know that was so good!" And she said "Whaea . . . give me Facebook, give me any social media. That's my arena. I love it. I can express myself in Facebook. I can argue, I can debate, it suits me, it suits the way I think." (Teacher interview.)

From the above reported student response to her teacher, there are strong indications the student had identified her strengths in literacy and realized the best way for her to formulate her ideas was in written media on-line, and to publish these ideas for debate within a safe digital learning environment. She had identified an ENS as a place that enabled her preferred learning style. She had also 'discovered' the perfect tool for her educational kōrero, allowing her to take ownership of the creative process.

Much of the evidence for increases in digital literacy and engagement for Māori within their ESN (which would work in fact for any students), have pointed towards the evolving identity for ākonga and teachers from their school classroom into their on-line classroom.

Ākonga engaging in respectful relationships in a 'normal' classroom	Ākonga engaging in respectful relationships in ESN	Whānaungatanga as pedagogy for ākonga in ESN environments
In a 'normal' classroom, generally ākonga have the opportunity to only interact with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> other students their teacher. 	In an ESN, ākonga have the opportunity to interact with other ESN members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> students their teacher whānau/community. 	Ākonga have the opportunity to establish multiple relationships in a supportive and safe education environment.
Ākonga can engage in verbal conversations in class, subject to class rules.	Ākonga can carry on multiple text based conversations with anyone in their ESN, possibly in class.	Ākonga are free to engage in educational conversations with anyone in their ESN according to interest.
Ākonga sit with certain friends, or are seated in a classroom according to teacher judgments.	Ākonga have contact with the whole group at any time, based on group presence.	
Whānau/community are not normally present.	Whānau/community may be present.	
Ākonga ask verbal questions in class synchronously.	Ākonga ask text-based questions in class synchronously.	Ākonga are able to access help from their teacher connected to their optimal times for learning.
	Ākonga ask text-based questions from home asynchronously.	
Teacher is only available to help ākonga between normal school hours. They are often a director of teaching and learning.	Teacher is available to help ākonga outside of kura as synchronous or asynchronous support. Teacher is a facilitator.	
Educational relationships are established by the teacher according to the pedagogy operating in the classroom.	ESN relationships are established by the members of the ESN according to student needs.	Ākonga are able to maintain a supportive on-line relationship with their teacher.
Ākonga generally follow a teaching and learning programme of work contained within a class.	ESN interaction follows threads of interest and engagement in topics. All written material is immediately 'published' to an on-line forum.	Relationship interactions between teacher and student are highly visible on-line and are recorded.
Ākonga interaction or engagement is not always visible or captured.	Ākonga interaction and engagement is highly visible and always captured.	All ākonga written material are shared within the group.
Ākonga communicate in face-to-face educational cohorts.	Ākonga may show online awareness as a partial reaction to social isolation living in a remote area.	Relationships may point to a change in social connectedness.

Developing writing and speaking skills through 'spoken paragraphs'

The practice of writing paragraphs is essential to good writing. Paragraphs help to break up large chunks of text and make the content easier for readers to digest. They guide the reader through your argument by focusing on one main idea at a time. However, knowing how to write a good, well-structured paragraph can be tricky. A well written paragraph takes its readers on a clear path, without detours, and can help to prepare the groundwork to speak clearly and with confidence.

One strategy that teachers could explore to develop students' confidence in writing is 'spoken paragraphs'. Simply put, spoken paragraphs are ideas organised in paragraphs (e.g. using your chosen acronym) that are *spoken* by students. The main purpose for doing so is to get students speaking more in structured ways, before they write. Spoken paragraphs give students time to practise the application of the core skills involved in using an acronym to structure a piece of writing or spoken text.

For effective implementation of the strategy, students need to:

- know the purpose of the strategy and how it will help them become good writers (and speakers);
- have a sound knowledge of the different parts of the acronym they are using and their possible functions;
- acquire a good understanding of key concepts or ideas;
- be able to apply the strategy to other areas of need or relevance e.g. writing their "lauga" or sermon for White Sunday.

The teacher needs to:

- know their students' strengths (and areas for improvement) as this could also be used to guide their thinking about possible grouping;
- identify students who are likely to need extra help e.g. language needs and provide support for them;
- persist with the strategy and make it part of their teaching and learning repertoire;
- offer multiple opportunities for students to practise in a variety of settings and challenges;
- have a repertoire of language phrases and key subject-specific vocabulary required for students to use;
- ensure there is sufficient space for group work to take place as it is likely to get 'noisier' as students are fully engaged in the learning activity.

Suggested process

1. Divide class into groups of threes or a number that matches the number of 'letters' in your acronym (e.g. 3 for SEE, 5 for TEXAS).
2. Allocate parts of the model to different students (e.g. for SEE: student 1=S, student 2=E, student 3=E).
3. Give each group one key idea from the topic they are learning about.
4. Provide a graphic organiser for students to 'tease out' their chosen key idea further.
5. Choose ideas from step 4 to use in your paragraph.
6. Select appropriate language phrases to express your key ideas.
7. Each student works out what he/she is going to say.
8. Speak it/make changes if necessary.
9. Present it/review it.

Spoken paragraphs also help students develop a wider definition of writing as consisting of a series of processes - brainstorming ideas, identifying main ideas, drafting, editing and presentation.

'Words on Wellington' Conference



Registrations for the 2015 conference are still open.

<http://www.eventuate.co.nz/nzla/>

Wednesday 30 Sept - Fri 2 Oct
at Westpac Stadium
Wellington.

- Share and collaborate on what is happening now, and in the future for literacy in both New Zealand and internationally.
- Consolidate and expand on your knowledge about 'the world of literacy'.
- Expand your portfolio of ideas and resources to ensure that both you and your students are receiving best practice literacy teaching.
- The 2015 Conference themes are **Critical, Cultural and Creativity**.

