

Secondary Student Achievement PLD

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National Newsletter: English

Information and resources for middle leaders in secondary schools | Term 2 2016

Kia ora tātou.

Continuing this year's theme of exploring and considering ideas, in this newsletter we look at:

- Finding out about Shakespeare.
- Giving effective feedback on ideas expressed in creative writing.

We also provide some analysis of the 2015 NCEA results for English and draw your attention to some changes to the Conditions of Assessment for the internal standards and the Assessment Specifications for the externals.

Where there's Will, there are ways (to find out about him)...

In case you hadn't noticed, April 23 this year marks the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death. You may have had the opportunity to take your students to the [Pop Up Globe](#) or to the [Auckland Libraries Shakespeare exhibition](#) but for those of us in the rest of the country, there is still plenty going on as well as some excellent resources available freely online.

The [Shakespeare Globe Centre NZ](#) has a useful calendar of events around the country on their [Shake Alive](#) page, which is constantly updated. You can use it to find something going on near you. If you're involved in something that isn't on the calendar, you can contact them and they'll add it for you, or you can add it directly to a Google Docs spreadsheet.

Even if you can't get to the Auckland Libraries exhibition, you can still view it [online](#). From the collection of Sir George Grey, there are the first four folios, as well as a Pericles quarto amongst other contemporary books and letters that really give a sense of Shakespeare's world.

The [Folger Library](#) has a section for teachers and learners that has a great range of classroom resources. You can also listen to some of the Folger Shakespeare Anniversary Series of lectures [here](#).

The British Library's [Discovering Literature: Shakespeare](#) page has easy to access, free articles that could support students' research for 3.8 as well as teaching resources that might give you ideas for your own lessons.

[This Shakespeare magazine](#) is also cool. You could even get your students to make their own [issuu](#) magazine of some of their writing about Shakespeare. Or anything else of course! Easy to link to or embed in your class or school website as well.

Lastly, [Shakespeare's globe.com](#) is well worth a visit. It has an interactive video tour of The Globe, which is aimed at younger children as well as a range of other resources for teachers.

Do you swear by any other great online resources? Why not add them to this [padlet](#).

2016 free SSA national workshops

It's not too late to enrol.

The focus of this year's workshops will be on the importance of IDEAS in English (NZC levels 6-8).

This workshop will explore the centrality of the *Ideas* Achievement Objective to student achievement and engagement, especially in the *Creating Meaning* strand of the curriculum, and the external standards. Morning tea is provided. BYO lunch.

Northern and Central North workshops

To enrol, click on the link below (which is the underlined location).

[Auckland](#): 9 May
[Northland \(Whangarei\)](#): 11 May
[Far North \(Kerikeri\)](#): 13 May
[East Coast \(Gisborne\)](#): 13 May
[Waikato \(Hamilton\)](#): 18 May
[Bay of Plenty \(Rotorua\)](#): 19 May
[Hawkes Bay \(Napier\)](#): 23 May

Enquiries to c.orr@auckland.ac.nz

Central South and Southern workshops

[Click here to enrol](#)
Wellington: 11 May
Invercargill: 16 May
Dunedin: 18 May
Christchurch: 20 May
Palmerston North: 24 May
New Plymouth: 26 May
Nelson: 31 May

Enquiries to essadmin@otago.ac.nz

“What I did in the holidays”: giving effective feedback to the IDEAS aspect of creative writing

One thing that many of us find challenging is to give students feedback on the quality of their *ideas* in creative (and perhaps also formal) writing. We don't want the students to take the criticism personally or make them give up on writing because they feel that they are, 'no good at it'. These challenges and concerns are exacerbated when the writing is of a particularly personal nature. However, we are also not doing our students any favours if we skirt around the issue of the quality of ideas by only supporting them with their writing through feedback on spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Often it is not actually the quality of the idea that is the issue but the execution of that idea in the writing. In many cases the writing would be improved greatly if they were to ensure that the idea or ideas that they are expressing are made *believable* to the reader.

When it comes to creative writing we often encourage students to write about what they know and so many girls, for example, try to write about ideas around love; falling in love; breaking up; fighting with a close friend; arguing with parents. These are all things they know but one way they can go wrong when writing about these topics is feeling the need to exaggerate the situation, to make it big, 'Hollywood big', when in fact it is much more realistic when the real details are developed in ways that are believable.

Students worry that one event won't be enough to focus on and so they include several ideas. For example, falling in love, parents separating and the object of their affection being transgender. These are all significant ideas and worthy of pieces of creative writing in their own right but when combined into one piece each may lack believability because they are not fully developed. In order to fit them all into the piece the student may have had to be very economical with information or description, which leaves the reader unconvinced.

Careful proofreading of detail is also very important in these sorts of pieces. The adjectives and adverbs used to describe characters, settings, mood, and plot events, need to convince the reader. We don't have to believe that we would fall in love with this character met only once on a park bench at the beach, but we do have to be convinced that that is what happened to the writer. What is it about the way they looked? What they said? What they did? That might persuade us that this happened?

It is also important for students to think about the main purpose of their writing – is it mainly intended to persuade, inform or entertain? There is certainly nothing wrong with the main intention of the piece being to entertain; a lot of what they will be reading by choice and for their enjoyment will be written to entertain. If this is the main purpose then they should get feedback about how entertaining it was (and perhaps from a range of people as we don't all have the same tastes). Which bits did we enjoy the most and why? Conversely, which were the least effective and why? Which words added to the story? How was the variation of sentence lengths used for effect? The writing does not need to be laugh-out-loud funny to be entertaining but again, the world, character and plot events have to be believable to the reader. That does not mean that they have to be real but what happens within them, to them or because of them needs to be consistent.

Supporting students to be attentive to detail is one of the ways we can successfully provide robust feedback on their creative writing without crushing their spirit. See the NZATE resource [Effective Practices in Teaching Writing](#) for further information.

Useful links

Video resources

The SSA National Co-ordinators are developing a range of short videos to support teachers. To access the videos go to:

[Information literacy standard](#)

[Purpose and Audience](#)

[Assessing connections](#)

English Online

<http://englishonline.tki.org.nz/>

ESOL Online

<http://esolonline.tki.org.nz/>

Literacy Online

<http://literacyonline.tki.org.nz/>

Competition for Māori students

[THE CHALLENGE 2016](#) is a multimedia competition being run by education.govt.nz open to Years 7-13 students of Māori descent. Entries close on 8 July 2016, 5.00pm.



2016 conference: re:generation

This year's conference will be hosted in Christchurch/Ōtautahi and take place Wednesday 13 to Friday 15 July.

For more information visit the conference website:

<http://nzateconference.co.nz>



Looking at the 2015 results: a snapshot

Level 2 written and visual text exams

When the newly aligned Level 2 standards were first assessed externally in 2012 there were more students entered for 2.2 AS 91099 *Analyse specified aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s), supported by evidence* (30,077 entries) than 2.1 AS 91098 *Analyse specified aspect(s) of studied written text(s), supported by evidence* (29,063 entries). While overall numbers of entries for both standards were lower last year with 2.1 having 27,603 entries, 2.2 had dropped below that to 26,676.

Over the three years of the new standards, students have always performed better in 2.1 than 2.2 and perhaps the perception that 2.2 is a 'harder' standard means teachers have become more selective with the students who are entered to sit it? As the table below shows, unfortunately this selection process does not seem to be making a difference to overall pass rates or to achievement for Māori and Pasifika.

AS 91099	Not Achieved	Achieved	Merit	Excellence
2012				
All	29.4	41.8	21.3	7.3
Māori	39.8	40.1	16.2	3.8
Pasifika	45.5	36.1	15.2	3
2013				
All	25.7	43.9	22.6	7.8
Māori	36.7	43.5	15.2	4.6
Pasifika	38.6	41.9	15.7	3.9
2014				
All	26.5	42.4	23.0	8.1
Māori	38.9	39.5	16.4	5.2
Pasifika	40.7	40.5	15.5	3.3
2015				
All	27.4	42.1	22.2	8.3
Māori	38.7	40.2	16.5	4.6
Pasifika	39	41.2	15.1	4.4

Although fewer students overall were entered for 2.1 than 2.2, the reverse is the case for Māori students (3,554 and 3,723 respectively in 2015). The fact that Māori students, particularly boys, are less likely to be entered for either external is worth reflecting on. It is also useful to ask what evidence is informing our decisions to prefer visual text over written text for Māori.

Number of entries AS 2.1	2013	2014	2015
Māori	3,635	3,650	3,554
Māori boys	1,469	1,492	1,517
Māori girls	2,166	2,158	2,037

Number of entries AS 2.2	2013	2014	2015
Māori	4,054	3,902	3,723
Māori boys	1,746	1,694	1,599
Māori girls	2,308	2,208	2,124

Assessment reports remind us that students are disadvantaged when they try to answer using texts that are 'lacking in substance.' This points to the AO and the question arises as to whether or not we are giving some students sufficient opportunity to learn when we give them such texts.

Perhaps *engaging* and *accessible* are not the same thing. In an effort to find texts that our students will engage with, are we looking for texts that are more accessible, rather than demanding or sophisticated? Does this mean choosing film over written text for some students? Or less demanding films for some classes?

What's new from NZQA?



To keep up to date with any changes, follow English NZQA on Facebook.

Level One English digital exam

NZQA will soon be contacting schools to let them know how they can be involved in the 2016 digital exam pilot which this year includes Level 1 English.

Click [here](#) for details, or go to:

<http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/future-state/digital-assessment-2016-trials-and-pilots/>

New forms of "Assessor Support"

NZQA now offers a wider variety of assessor support options to help with good assessment practice for internally assessed standards. These support options are designed to create a sustained change of practice through engaging in practical activities and discussions. They provide a further opportunity to establish and maintain learning communities.

To find out more go to the [assessor support](#) page on NZQA and see the [February NZQA Newsletter](#).

2016 Assessment Specifications for externally assessed standards

The assessment specifications for each level can be found under resources for externally assessed standards on the English subject page. Here's a link to Level 1: [Level 1 assessment specifications](#)



Updated Conditions of Assessment

You will find these on the top right hand side of the [Resources for Internally Assessed Achievement Standards](#) page at each level.

For middle leaders

TKI: Changes to the Conditions of Assessment

The Ministry of Education has revised and updated the Conditions of Assessment (CoA) in all subjects. The purpose of the revision is to ensure a consistent approach and message across all subjects. It is important to note that the CoA is not a set of rules. It provides *guidance* to schools and teachers.

The main change is the addition of a generic section at the start of each CoA that provides a common message across all subjects.

The revisions do not signal a significant change in English. However, they do serve as a useful reminder that we need to ensure that our assessment practices are flexible and fair for all students and that they should reflect and reinforce the way the students have been learning. The new statements also provide us with confidence that:

A separate assessment event is not needed for each standard. Often assessment can be integrated into one activity that collects evidence towards two or three different standards from a programme of learning. Evidence can also be collected over time from a range of linked activities (for example, in a portfolio). This approach can also ease the assessment workload for both students and teachers.

To see the updated Conditions of Assessment go to:

<http://ncea.tki.org.nz/Resources-for-Internally-Assessed-Achievement-Standards>. You will find the English ones on the top right hand side of the page at each level.

NZQA: Changes to the Assessment Specifications

The 2016 Assessment Specifications are [now available online](#) and there are some useful points to help you prepare your students. The specifications remind us that the quality of the students' writing is more important than the length and that texts chosen should encourage student engagement and have characteristics that allow students to demonstrate the required level of response.

Suggested essay structure and lists of suggested language features in visual or oral texts will **not** be included in the examinations this year.

To see the updated assessment specifications, [click here](#) or go to:

<http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/qualifications-standards/qualifications/ncea/subjects/assessment-specifications/>

Did you know?

[SweetSearch](#) is a search engine for students. It searches only the 35,000 websites that a staff of research experts and librarians and teachers have evaluated and approved when creating the content on [findingDulcinea](#).

They constantly evaluate search results and 'fine-tune' them, by increasing the ranking of websites from organizations such as the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian, PBS and university websites.

SweetSearch helps students find outstanding information faster. It enables them to determine the most relevant results from a list of credible resources, and makes it much easier for them to find primary sources. The curators exclude not only obvious spam sites, but also marginal sites that read well, but lack academic or journalistic rigor. As importantly, the very best websites that are often buried on other search engines appear on the first page of SweetSearch results.

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All schools should receive a digital and hard copy of this newsletter. Newsletters can also be accessed through the [Secondary middle leaders](#) portal on TKI.

If you are aware of anyone whom you think would benefit from receiving this newsletter (particularly any new heads of department in your area) we would appreciate hearing from you.

Suggestions welcomed for improvements and content for future newsletters.