

Secondary Student Achievement PLD

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National Newsletter: English

Information and resources for middle leaders in secondary schools | Term 3 2016

Kia ora tātou. It was great to see so many people willing to *regenerate* themselves at this year's extremely successful conference. In this newsletter Jenny MacDonald reflects on another conference, the NATE conference she and Cynthia recently attended and presented at in Stratford-upon-Avon. Then, continuing this year's theme of exploring and considering ideas, we also look at ideas in oral presentations and ways to access ideas within texts.

NATE conference

There is much to be said of the benefits of participating in professional learning. Value lies not only in the new learning but the interactions you have and the networking with others along the way. Professional learning helps to keep you connected to communities of teachers beyond your own context as well as engaging with practice and thinking different to your own. New Zealand teachers of English are fortunate to have multiple opportunities to participate in professional learning either online via the English forum, participating in clusters or attending workshops and conferences where professionals are able to both share and be challenged. Both lead to personal and professional growth.

Recently Cynthia Orr and I were fortunate to attend and present at the National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE) conference in Stratford-upon-Avon about a partnership project between Team Solutions, the Auckland Art Gallery and a South Auckland school. Titled 'All the World's a Classroom' the theme of the conference reflected the focus on finding creative solutions to the challenges presented to those in the profession of teaching English and acknowledged the diversity of our subject where there is no single approach, opinion, interpretation or view. As stated by the director of NATE in his conference booklet welcome, the conference is an occasion when different voices can be heard.

Held over two days, the conference treated us to a packed programme of workshops, seminars and keynote speakers such as poets John Hegley and Rob Auton and the current Children's Laureate, author/illustrator, Chris Riddell. Two art educators from Manchester Art Gallery ran the first workshop which Cynthia and I attended. The similarity between their project, which linked the deep exploration of artwork to support creative writing, and our own project, which focuses on the use of creative and critical thinking frameworks that support the 'creating meaning' strand of our curriculum, particularly the 'create a visual text' standard, provided both confirmation and inspiration. Also reassuring was the realisation that the concerns of UK teachers of English echo our own, not just on curriculum matters but the day-to-day issues such as engaging reluctant learners and dealing with administration overload.

Connecting with other English teachers on the other side of the world reinforced the knowledge that we are not alone but rather we are a community of professionals. On a more personal note, being in such a hallowed place, we naturally had to get a play in at the RSC so treated ourselves to a performance of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'; one of the many additional perks of being at conference.

By Jenny MacDonald

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/>



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.

ERO

Every year ERO publishes a number of national reports and resources and other publications. Published this year, and of relevance to secondary schools are:

[Vocational pathways-authentic and relevant learning](#)

[Wellbeing for success-effective practice](#)

[Wellbeing for success-a resource for schools](#)

[Modern New Zealand learning practice-glossary](#)

Parody and critical literacy: Wising up to form over content in oral texts

Constructing and delivering oral text is about using language features to develop, sustain (NCEA Levels 2 and 3) and structure ideas. Students sometimes have control of one criterion, but not the other. They may perform brilliantly, but not develop ideas sufficiently; or they may read out a prepared speech that has great ideas, but fall short in the delivery.

This [TED parody](#) cleverly shows how mastery of language features, in particular the tropes of TED talks, can mask the fact that the talk has no ideas at all. Ironically this is the idea that this parody develops and sustains by imitating the structure of the TED talk. This could be a fun thing to explore in class. Students could record which oral language features the speaker deliberately uses and comment on their effect. The key, when thinking about effect, is to think in terms of what it does to the audience. Students need to understand that *effect* means how the audience is *affected* by a language feature as well as what it adds to the text itself. The use of the slide show makes the audience feel like the speaker is an authority. His use of repetition makes the audience feel like he is saying something significant. Interestingly these language features do not draw attention to the substance of his ideas. There is no substance.

Help students think about parody by asking them how a talk about a talk with no ideas can develop ideas. Is the purpose to suggest that all TED talks are specious? Does it suggest that we have become uncritical viewers, taken in by rhetorical devices without considering meaning? Are there real-life examples of oral texts that can persuade through their rhetoric even when they are nonsense? Is this becoming more of a prominent feature in our media of late?

There is no doubt that the need for critical literacy skills has never been more important. With the proliferation of content and the blurring of the distinction between opinion and journalism, it is harder than ever for people to make up their own minds about truth. These [critical literacy questions](#) from the Tasmanian Department of Education (full link below) help support more critical viewing and reading. You might curate - or get your students to curate - a set of texts using something like Livebinder, or Pearltrees, and use these questions to structure a discussion.

Students need the skills to understand how language features and rhetoric position and manipulate them, just as much as they need to be able to use them effectively in their own oral texts.

TED parody:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ZBKX-6Gz6A

Critical literacy questions:

<http://203.10.46.30/mre/621/mod13/CriticalLiteracy-TasmanianDeptEducation28-12-11.docx>



Next year's NZATE conference will be hosted in Waitangi and will take place from Wednesday 12th to Friday 14th July, 2017.

For more information visit the conference website:

www.weavingwords.co.nz

What's new?



To keep up to date with any changes and development you can follow English NZQA on Facebook.

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 with fellow participants. They provide a further opportunity to establish and maintain learning communities.

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

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](#)

Exemplars

All achievement standards across the different subjects have been streamlined.

This means that the standards will generally have only one exemplar set on the NZQA website.

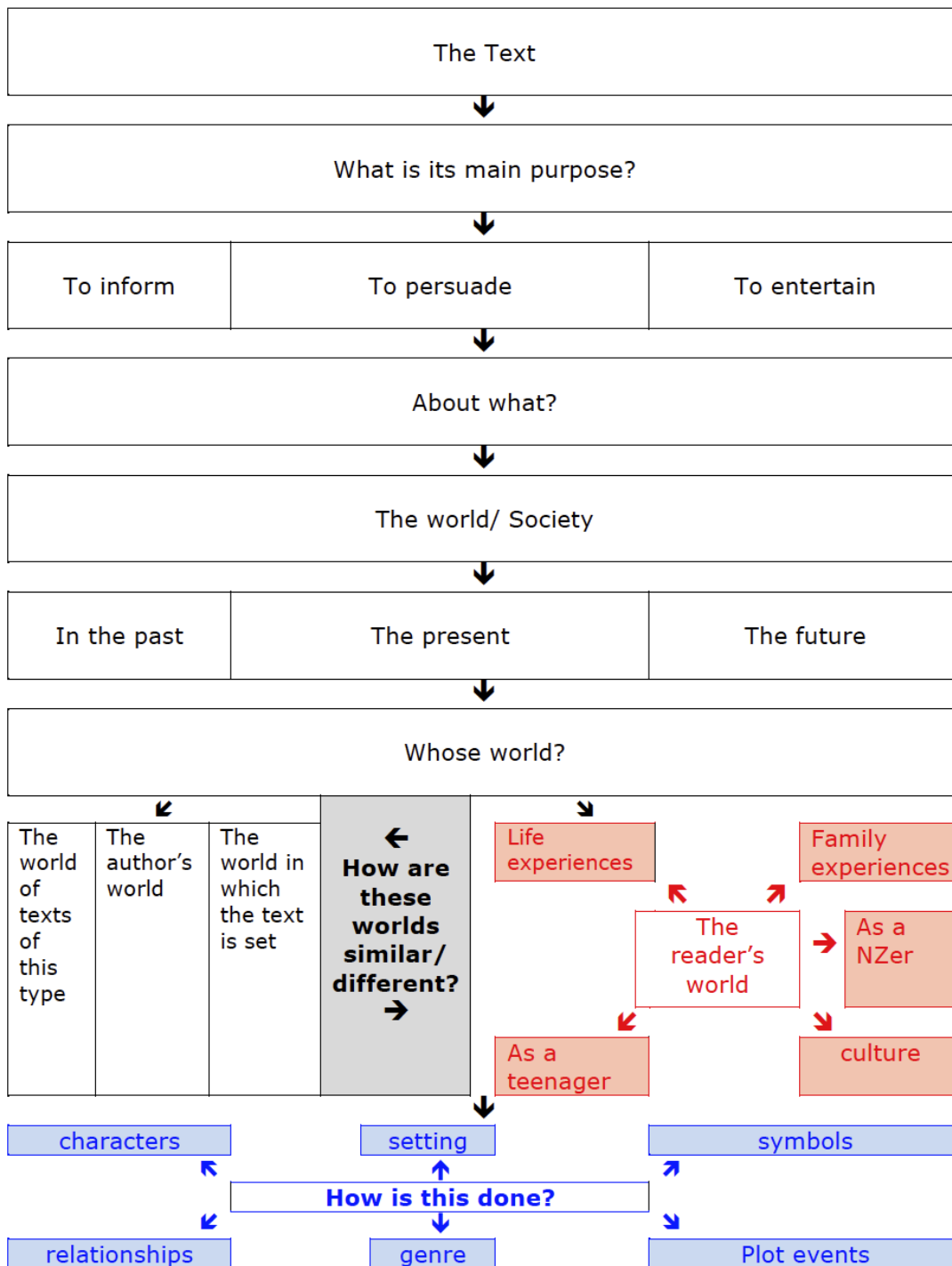
The only exceptions are where there are quite varied forms of submissions, e.g. for writing there are literature essays, creative, discursive and more formal text types.

Elements of a text

The diagram below was developed as part of this year’s SSA national workshop: *The Importance of Ideas in English (NZC 6-8)*. Participants at the workshops found the diagram useful when thinking about the different ways that a student can develop their own ideas and make authentic connections beyond the text. Students could use any aspects of the diagram as a starting point for ideas about a text for any of the Making Meaning standards.

Reader response theory is central to the English curriculum in the NZC. This article provides further information about [reader response theory](#). The thoughts of the students as readers and what they bring to text are highly valued. We don’t need to weigh them down with theory but we do need to help them to express their responses as informed by the text.

How might you see this diagram being of use with students? What might you (or they) add to the diagram? What might you question about it?



For middle leaders

We are now more than two thirds through the 2016 academic year. This is the time when students often start asking, 'Am I going to pass?' With the introduction of NCEA teachers were reluctant to think about there being a 'pass' in a course; students achieved in individual standards. However, more recently there has been more of an emphasis placed on pathways for students and seeing how each subject can contribute to a student's whole record of learning.

14 credits is a useful benchmark to use as a measure for student success (or 'passing') a subject. Gaining 14 credits at Merit or Excellence means that students have the opportunity for subject endorsement (if at least 3 of those credits are internal, and 3 are external). Click here for more information about [subject endorsement](#).

In schools that offer 6 subjects, 14 credits in each subject will mean a student will have comfortably achieved Level 1 with 84 credits. This means that each subject is contributing equally to students' academic achievement. In 5 subject schools that target would need to be 16 credits at Level 1; however, at Levels 2 and 3 where students need to gain 60 credits at that level, it would be 14 credits. 14 credits in 3 Level 3 subjects are also what students require for the subject contribution to University Entrance. Click here for more information about [University Entrance](#).

What are the possibilities for students to gain 14 quality credits in their English course at your school?

- Currently, how many students are likely to 'pass' English using 14 credits as the measure?
- Are there certain standards that you consider are *essential* for students moving on with English?
- Would you prefer that students already have at least 14 credits going into the external examinations so that there is less pressure on them to 'pass' and more opportunity to do their best?
- Currently, how is English contributing to the academic achievement of students at your school? What percentage of students who gained their certificate at any level gained 14 credits in English? (Remember that if your school offers 5 subjects at Level 1 this would be 16 credits.)
- For how many Year 13 students is English one of the 3 subjects that is contributing to the subject component of University Entrance?

Did you know?

On the 4th of November 1605, 'a very tall and desperate fellow,' was found in the basement of London's parliament buildings with thirty-six barrels of powder. On his person were, 'three matches and all other instruments fit for blowing up the powder.' Had Guy Fawkes succeed in lighting one of those three matches, the explosion would have killed the entire leadership of England, from King James and his family to the nobility, heads of church and political representatives from every corner of the land. King James estimated that the damage would have been even greater, saying that, "thirty thousand persons would have perished at a stroke, the city would have been sacked, and ... the world would have seen a spectacle so terrible and terrifying that it's like has never been heard of." This was the world into which Shakespeare's darkest tragedies were born.

We live in uncertain times, when terrorism constantly threatens us with terrible and terrifying spectacles. Shakespeare's writing gave, and continues to give, in Hamlet's words 'the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.' (3.2.23, 4)

James Shapiro's latest book, *1606 William Shakespeare and the Year of Lear*, explores how the gunpowder plot, the plague and James' efforts to unite a divided kingdom inform and shape *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and, of course, *King Lear*. This is an excellent critical text to help students develop informed understanding of some of Shakespeare's greatest plays and learn how, more than just connecting to the Jacobean world, they gave it form.

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All schools should receive both a digital and hard copy of this newsletter.

Newsletters can also be accessed through the [Secondary middle leaders](#) portal on TKI.

Suggestions for improvements and possible content for future newsletters are welcome.