

## AAPAE NEWSLETTER NO 1. 19<sup>th</sup> September, 2002



This is a suggested logo for our association. It has been designed by students at Booroobin Sudbury School – a centre of learning. We invite comments and suggestions. Send a blank email to [ausschools@yahoo.com](mailto:ausschools@yahoo.com) and join in the discussion, or send your comments/sketches to The Secretary, AAPAE, 205 Longueville Rd LaneCove, 2066

With apologies to those who have read this on the network, the management committee decided to include these musings for those of you who have not linked into our network yet!

### **International Democratic Education Conference 2002** Written by Cecelia Bradley

Members and potential members of AAPAE, namely, Derek, Janelle, Ben, Michelle, (Booroobin), Chris, Wendy, Cec, (Currumbena), Helen, (Kinma), Adrienne, (Marbury) Andy, Geordie, (Sherbrooke), and the Tamariki, Mountain Valley and Springhill mobs from New Zealand were all able to attend.

#### THE SETTING

Christchurch and surrounds! The city was the place most of us landed in our various airlines and most of us were met as arranged (Helen has a story to tell here!) and taken on a very scenic drive 'over the hill' or through the tunnel, for about 40 minutes to LIVINGSPRINGS. Perched high on the rib of a volcano running down to Governors Bay, looking across in the distance to Lyttleton, the harbour area of the city, we had spectacular scenes and vistas to contemplate and green

paddocks and regenerating creeks and forests in which to wander when the intense wind and rain and eventual blizzard of the first 3 days abated.



#### THE PLAYERS

More than 200 people took part over the week. We had people from Israel, India, Japan, Korea, Nepal, USA, UK, Germany, Australia, New Zealand from more than 20 schools and other groups such as networks, associations, universities, institutes and interested individuals, ranging in age from 2 to 70 + years.

## THEMES

Yaacov Hecht, the director of Hadera Institute of Democratic Education gave an entertaining, inspiring start for the gathering in his address The Core of Democratic Education in which he concentrated on the prime role of pluralistic learning as one of the three cores of democratic education. His Institute of Democratic Education has been working with schools to enable them to become more democratic. He says that they can readily see and accept the need for democratic structures, accepting a parliament, meeting etc and the importance of the special relationship between adults and children, but throw their hands up and say "don't touch the curriculum!" The main difficulty they have is accepting and integrating the idea of freedom with the curriculum.

He also initiated the big picture idea of the week which saw the group discussing the relationship of the Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child as frameworks for us to articulate what we are about and to dialogue with the mainstream in all its forms.

Yoshiyuka Nagata, Senior Researcher, National Institute of Educational Research in Japan painted the picture for us of the growing school refusal issue and the responses of aware people in setting up free schools and spaces. He linked with Jaacov in calling for connection and communication with UNICEF. He is also very keen on setting up regional networks. Amukta Mahapatra spoke about her work, Initiating Quality Education in India, and her work with the government in promoting the values and practices of democratic education.

One of the major topics of formal and informal discussion was the nature of IDEC. There is strong support for it to maintain its very loose, anarchic nature and for the conference to remain in the hands of the host school and so keep its individual, celebratory, festival character.

**2003 conference will be at the Albany**

**Freeschool in New York**

**2004 will be in Madras in India.**

There has also been a need expressed previously and again this year for a more organised group which would be active throughout the year. One of the suggestions is to have an international Institute of Democratic Education and to have an institute in our countries. The nature of these is very much to be created, but groups such as our association are heading in that direction. Our moves to get the association happening are timely and coincide with what is happening in other places. We worked towards articulating a broad umbrella sentence/statement of aspiration.

*The diverse participants in democratic education are united in upholding the spirit if the Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and implementing this as the primary framework for the day to day practices in all learning environments.*

This section was written by Derek Shepherd

This was the result of several large group, small group and delegated group meetings. The resultant wording received a large majority vote in a fully democratic process of active conference participants. It may be amended at the next IDEC. Further it was agreed that at the next IDEC, young people will meet to devise a wording for democratic education that meets their language requirements. Further, the next IDEC will consider a number of further subsidiary defining words and phrases that articulates what democratic education means, following on from the above definition.

IDEC also agreed to a number of resolutions (5, I think), and these will be followed up. I would add that, although there is no continuing elected "government" of IDEC, all processes of the Conference were very much democratic, and based on participant input to whatever extent the participants wished / needed to be involved. IDEC is free flowing, and, in the end, is simply a

conference which anyone can attend, and is arranged periodically (by a School agreed by the participants at an earlier IDEC), but there is very clear focus on the needs, support and development of alternative, free, democratic, progressive Schools. It is proposed that IDEC's are held progressively around the world, so that as many people may participate as is possible. So there are likely to be IDEC's every 8 to 10 or 12 months in a different place, that are still open to anyone, but that will ensure the connectivity between peoples from as many places as possible is not lost as a result of IDEC's in far flung or remote places that are difficult for many to get to, unless (like us) it is once every decade.

Back to Cec!

The large presence of 40 people from Japan, meant that we became very accustomed to pauses in thought and speech as Gageki and Yoshi and others expertly translated. I enjoyed the rhythm of it and keep expecting it to happen now!

Dr Jan Robertson who is Director of Educational Leadership Centre, Waikato University spoke about Leadership in Democratic Schools to mixed reactions. In searching for the positives I thought it was great to see people working in the mainstream showing awareness of many of the issues and working with people in 'leadership positions' to, as she put it, develop the "capacity to look at things as if they could be otherwise."

Tony Collins a Lecturer at Christchurch College of Education spoke about The Metaphors of Education-understanding the power of the generative metaphor. He highlighted the language of dependence through transition to independence with some very challenging reminders of classroom language with which we are all familiar!

"All facing the front- Listen to me- Eyes looking at me- Pencils down , no fiddling, look this way- Hands up if you know the

answer- If you don't finish you..... Tomorrow we will have a test!" etc etc!!!

He also gave an exposition of "coercive isomorphism"(Donaldson, 1995) a process of the state forcing the operational language and management paradigm of one culture onto another' and in the case of education that of the corporate culture. I found this interesting because as well as this being an area of awareness and discussion which resonates with our experiences, there was also much general talk about the need, purpose and benefit of communicating effectively with 'other worlds' and 'cultures' - to challenge and perhaps relinquish any fringe, purist, isolationist position to which we might be clinging!

Derry Hannam, the Director Phoenix Institute in England was not able to attend but David Gribble did a session on his research- Participative Education in Schools- which provides "a little bit of evidence" about how well democratic education performs. There is some interesting material in this which I am trying follow up to add to our pool re testing and standards.

Speaking of which, I had a chance to talk with Dana Bennis from Albany Freeschool in New York and he was very interested in our testing and benchmark issues as the pressures for this in alternative schools in the USA are building. He is part of an organisation called STUDENTS against TESTING and he has passed on some other contacts for us.  
[www.NoMoreTests.com](http://www.NoMoreTests.com)  
[www.fairtest.org](http://www.fairtest.org)  
rouge forum (more of an activists org)

Each of the schools set up displays and/or did presentations and although it was difficult to attend all of these, it was very special to be able to see the uniqueness, diversity and the shared values and practices we all have. Much table talk at meals enabled us to catch up more personally and closely with how the schools operate and how life is for those in the school communities.

A session I particularly enjoyed was a panel discussion 'Life after Democratic Schools' in which ex-students from Tamariki, Albany, Tokyo Shure and Summerhill showed with humour and reflective insight how articulate, independent minded, honest and entertaining our kids are. Kid and adult activities at the conference included continuous table tennis - Jerry Mintz being personally responsible for the craze now sweeping NZ- swimming, go-carting, skiing, watching movies, walking, holding a talent show, origami, calligraphy, flax weaving, visiting Tamariki and Christchurch, eating, talking, talking, talking listening, listening, listening and experiencing a taste of Maori culture through a visit to a marae and the pakeha(whitefellas)at the conference gaining in confidence to introduce us to Maori language and songs, particularly appropriate to sending our words soaring. Another strong theme at the conference was the growing support and appreciation for

Raise public profiles of schools  
Make personal contact with other Schools - Encourage joining the email network and the association!  
Maintain and build personal contacts and relationships with people in government, political parties, education departments etc  
Continue to build AAPAE website  
Design logos, letterheads etc  
Research UNESCO/UNICEF Declaration of Human Rights/ Convention on Rights of Child  
Education Research -

networks at all levels. A number of 'international' groups are operating. Jerry Mintz coordinates AERO and the IDEC elist, David Gribble WREN which is to be changed to IDEN(International Democratic Net) which is a data base of all connected with IDEC. NCACS(National Coalition Alternative&Community Schools) which while based in USA has international membership.

We had 2 AAPAE sessions while at the conference and it was a boost to have the new input from Tamariki, Mountain Valley , Springhill from NZ, Sherbrooke from Vic, international support from Olivia and Jim from NCACS as well as the continued energy of Booroobin, Currumbena, Kinma and Marbury. I hope we will hear from the NZ mob on the network soon. We agreed on some practical strategies and some people volunteered to follow them up. These include

Research Partnerships  
Co- Authors Aust Research Grants -  
Contact Pine Community School re 2003 AAPAE Conference -  
Media  
Write articles for CONNECT / mainstream papers etc  
Kids' Council  
GIVE & GET  
Foundations and Public Beneficiaries - a new area for us to brainstorm!!!!

## CONFERENCE NEWS

from **JEN BURNLEY** Dept of  
Education, Wollongong University

I would like the group to have advance  
information about the

### **World Council for Curriculum and Instruction Triennial Conference**

It will be held in the southern hemisphere  
for the first time in 2004. I am running it  
somewhere in the Illawarra - finding it  
hard to get a venue which is not already  
booked out or which fits the budget as  
most participants are from developing  
countries. It is a wonderful opportunity to  
mingle with educators from other  
continents. I have been a member for over  
20 years but there are only about 3  
members in Australia. Generally we have  
participants from about 42 nations.  
Dates are July 5-10 2004 - first week of  
the school holidays.

I am asking overseas educators to arrive  
the week before so they can  
experience/learn /interact with local  
teachers in local school as long as I can  
get billets for them. There are triennial  
conferences. The last was in Spain. There  
are also interest groups, eg early  
childhood; community; global education  
and many others. Will send further info  
on these as I establish details. There is a  
professional journal which you get, not so  
useful perhaps for primary teachers as few  
primary teachers contribute. Now we  
could change all that!!!!

### **AAPAE 2003, 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference**

I have been in touch with Cathy Wilton  
and she is reasonably sure that the 2003  
conference will go ahead at  
Pine Community School, Brisbane during  
the Easter holidays. She is lost in  
cyberspace at the moment!! I have

encouraged her to find herself and link  
back in with the network so that we can all  
start communicating about this!

### **INTERNATIONAL DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION CONFERENCE ALBANY FREE SCHOOL < NEW YORK in JULY, 2003**

From **YOSHI NAGATA**  
**National Institute Educational  
Research, Japan**

Actually your organization's name  
includes Oceania and Asia, and as I  
told you, I and other 'alternative'  
educators are organizing a sort of Asian  
seminar for these years at the venue of  
Children's Village School in  
Thailand. I think you can come and join  
the next one that will be held  
sometime autumn next year at the same  
place. One of the organizers is Mr  
Hans van Willenswaard of SEM. See  
[http://www.sulaksivaraksa.org/network  
23.php](http://www.sulaksivaraksa.org/network23.php)

**3<sup>rd</sup> GLOBAL GATHERING  
& INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S  
FESTIVAL at MOO BAAN DEK  
(Children's Village School)  
THAILAND  
31st Jan - 11<sup>th</sup> Feb 2003  
For info contact Jim Connor  
[Sea.anicca@juno.com](mailto:Sea.anicca@juno.com)**

### **WEBSITES of interest!**

[www.idec2003.com](http://www.idec2003.com)

[www.worldwiderealeducation.net](http://www.worldwiderealeducation.net)

[www.marbury.sa.edu.au/aapae](http://www.marbury.sa.edu.au/aapae)

[www.NCACS.org](http://www.NCACS.org)

The management committee (Chris & Cec) decided to give this newsletter a try. This is my (Cec's) first attempt to put together a newsletter for AAPAE. I take full responsibility for this 'learn by doing process' the ideas expressed, the content, the missed edits, etc etc! I welcome any comments, suggestions, criticism if you must, technical assistance, articles, photos, cartoons etc for any possible future ventures. Chris and I urge you to consider membership of the ASSOCIATION and once considered, please send in your subscription, and encourage others to do the same!

Membership forms accompany this newsletter.

**JOIN THE NETWORK – it's FREE!**

Send a blank email to

[ausschoolssubscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:ausschoolssubscribe@yahoo.com)

**KINMA & CURRAMBENA & AAPAE** have been meeting to work together on the National Benchmarking and Basic Skills Testing Issue and there is an update accompanying this newsletter.

### **AAPAE 'PUBLICATIONS'**

now available for sale are

**1. Papers and Discussion from 2001  
Currambena Conference - Cost \$20.00**

**2. Papers and Discussions from 2002  
Marbury Conference – Cost \$20.00**

**3. Papers and Discussions from 2002  
IDEC Conference, NEW ZEALAND  
Cost - \$40.00**

(Money covers printing costs)

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