

# AUSTRALASIAN DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION COMMUNITY

## ADEC

NEWSLETTER No 16  
2<sup>4</sup>th JUNE 2012

We need a LOGO for ADEC  
Forward suggestions and designs to ADEC WEBSITE COMMITTEE  
via [president@aapae](mailto:president@aapae).



### COMMUNITY & COLLABORATION

What makes a healthy & vibrant community?

We'll explore this topic through a range of activities including keynote speakers, group sessions, meals together, and some activities led by the children of conference host Pine Community School.

Keynote Speakers: Dr Marcus Bussey (USC),  
Dr Jo Brownlee (QUT)  
Dr Sue Walker (QUT)

Registrations are open, and for more details about the conference visit the website: <http://www.pinecommunityschool.org/ADEC>

## IDEC 2012

### OLD AND NEWS FRIENDS MEET AT IDEC 2012 IN CAGUAS PUERTO RICO

Some of the group from our ASIA/PACIFIC REGION which met twice during IDEC2012.



(Not in order in the photo)

Tae Wook Ha, Korea, Tui Michell N.Z, Pat Price Aust, Kageki Asakura Japan, Amukta Mahapatra India, Trudy Juransz Sri Lanka, Nwie Aung, Myanmar, Jim Connor USA/Thailand, Hsi Yah Dha, Mynamar, Mi Lay New Myanmar, Aye Aye Phyu Myanmar, Aya Aye Yun, Mynamar, Lee Young Yi Korea, Lee Jong Wha Korea, Ji ioon Kim Korea, Chris Price Aust, Iku Fujimatsu, USA & Eakpot Nimkulrat, Thailand/USA Harn, Thailand and Jayan, India are not in the photo

**Report prepared and submitted by: Tui Michell  
(Tui's attendance at IDEC 2011 was supported by AAPAE)**

IDEC 2012 was held in the city of Caguas, Puerto Rico and was heavily supported by the local community and mayor, MR William Maranda Torres and coordinated by the host school Nuestra Escuela.

The conference had over 900 participants attend over the 4 days the conference was held. One of the conferences aims was to promote locally the success of Democratic schools and how Caguas can become a leader in education for all of Puerto Rico. The conference had many



sponsors both locally and internationally but the main sponsor and organiser of the conference was the school Nuestra Escuela and its student and teacher volunteers, including the local youth committee.

The conference was held in both English and Spanish languages with the majority of presentations being in Spanish but being translated into English.

It was wonderful to see this mixture of both languages. The Puerto Ricans did a great job in showing off their diverse culture and hospitality to all attendees. The conference also provided opportunities to visit local schools and talk to the students and teachers engaged in these projects. These trips provided a fascinating look at the local issues and how democratic education is being used to support change and development in these communities. I had the privilege of visiting Nuestra Escuela (the host school) and was given a guided tour by a very confident young woman who is a student at the school.

I really wanted to make an impact for ADEC as I was one of their representatives, so when I got there I asked myself, who in this room of 900 people is considered part of ADEC? How can I make contact and promote the communication between the whole of Australasia when it is so large? To my amazement every person I spoke to from this region (and others) were very interested in the opportunity to

create stronger networks between schools and communities. After much discussion, I as an ADEC delegate proposed our own regional meeting for the schools of the Asia-Pacific sector. This meeting was announced by Amukta Mahapatra (from India) to the community and was held during one of the open spaces/ free times within the conference timetable. In total we held two ADEC related meetings to discuss ideas and issues of relevance to our region. There were many participants from this region, we had delegates from two different parts of India, Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Myanmar, Nepal and Thailand. ADEC committee member and Curambena representative Chris Price took minutes of these meetings as well as an email list to support communication and future planning. The first idea was suggested jointly by Kageki (Japan) and Amukta (India) that in IDEC 2014 (Korea) we hold our own mini-conference for one day either before or after the conference in Korea. This suggestion was supported by all attendees but most importantly Tae from Korea who will be involved in the coordination of

IDEC 2014. The main aim of this was to create a smaller, interactive discussion forum for this region

- . an email list to support better communication for schools in the region
- . support ongoing contact and the discussion of local issues
- . create a platform to promote Democratic education
- . engage local governments and education bodies in this process.

As a committee we also are proposing to conduct a similar extra conference day in Colorado (IDEC 2013) to further the strengthening and communication ties for the region.

During this proposed regional day, each participant of this session will introduce themselves and school/ organisation, giving a small talk about how they communicate with local government authorities, things that have been positive and challenging and lessons learnt that others could gain from through this process.

I feel that these regional ADEC meetings provided us with a strong foundation for ensuring better communication and creating an opportunity at each IDEC to learn about other schools and the progress of

Democratic education in our region. I will look to attend the IDEC conference and regional day in Colorado 2013 and I hope we will have even more regional participants than the first of our meetings held in Puerto Rico 2012. If you are interested as an individual or a school community in being part of the email and communication list for ADEC and the regional day movement, please contact members of the ADEC team via the following website:  
[www.aapae.edu.au](http://www.aapae.edu.au)

Lastly I would like to extend my congratulations to the Korean IDEC delegation for being awarded the opportunity to hold IDEC in Korea in 2014. This is a fantastic opportunity for Korea to show piece the democratic schools in this country and as a region strengthen ties and broaden contacts within the ADEC Network. I would like to personally thank the ADEC team for providing me with this opportunity as a representative and attendee for the IDEC conference in Puerto Rico, 2012.

**Notes on my trip to Caquas, Puerto Rico for International Democratic Education Conference in March.**

**By Chris Price (whose attendance was supported by Currambena)**

Dear Community,  
 A very big thank you to you all for sending me to this conference. This conference is held every year somewhere in the world and over the years we have tried to send some one from the school.  
 It is a wonderful experience to go to be immersed in a different culture even for a few days and to meet and listen to stories about like-minded schools, teachers and children. To also have the time to have longer conversations about the challenges & triumphs of our

schools. This conference was no exception.  
 Puerto Rico is a Commonwealth Territory of U.S.A and some Puerto Ricans would say they are a colony. They have an independently elected government, with tight controls by the U.S. government. However in the last 2 referendums they have voted down becoming a state of the U.S. or becoming independent. For the Puerto Ricans this conference was an opportunity to engage all players in education looking to make changes seen to be essential for

all their citizens. At the conference the organisers had brought together very actively these groups and by the end had agreed a frame-work for change. They had also come up with an agreement between organisations that had been looking to change educational outcomes to work together. So impressive and of course months of work hard proceeded this moment. The Puerto Ricans were delighted!

They have high youth unemployment, areas of extreme poverty, children disillusioned with the regimental nature of school and truancy is also high. They have a very vibrant culture in art, dance, music, film and drama. We were shown all these during the conference and a lot of young people take part in these activities. They were very proud to be able to show us. There was also a large volunteer group, all young people who run forums for youth to be able to speak, the IDEC meeting to discuss proposals for the next IDEC conferences & introduced sessions. Their end of conference performance was like a mini Olympic opening performance- breath taking & a wonderful finale.

For me the highlights were several school visits to quite diverse communities who had found that using democratic models and self regulated learning had boosted children's learning and confidence. Also their whole community had also become more engaged.

Several presentations emphasised using digital media to engage students in asking and documenting big questions they wanted to explore and how to show the deep learning that happens to the child, teacher, parent and government bodies.

Stories from Latin America about horrific repression during dictatorships with the destruction to education and society. As two presenters said "Where the government becomes the terrorist in their own state." This has led to a big push for students to research this history. There are also programmes about democracy, right to peace and freedom and to keep governments responsible for Human Rights. These ideas were echoed by educators in other countries where there had been or still have repressive governments –like Myanmar. The ability of children to experience democracy and

practice it in their education was seen as an essential part to becoming having active participants in their learning and in society.

A very interesting survey of what was a democratic school has been done by a Turkish researcher and lead to a lively discussion about power in schools. This spilled over into the local bar with Mojitos in hand.

I can send the study to any one interested.

We also had 2 meetings of the Australasian group of delegates (most of them are in the photo) to talk about support we can

give each other and ideas to expand our networks. There was a commitment to meet in Boulder, Colorado IDEC2013 and Sth Korea, 2014 to continue these discussions. We hope to have more time to do this in the IDEC program next year. The group included people from New Zealand, Myanmar, Thailand, U.S.A, Japan, India, Sth Korea, Thailand & Australia.

There are always lots of really interesting folk to talk with at these conferences & it stimulates lots of debate, exchange of information, networks plus a lot of laughs.

### **Minutes of first meeting of Australasian delegates**

#### **IDEC 2012 Caquas, Puerto Rico 27<sup>th</sup> March**

**Present:** Tui Michell N.Z, Pat Price Aust, Kageki Asakura Japan, Amukta Mahapatra India, Trudy Juransz Sri Lanka, Nwie Aung, Myanmar, Jim Connor USA/Thailand, Hsi Yah Dha, Myanmar, Mi Lay New Myanmar, Aye Aye Phyu Myanmar, Aya Aye Yun, Myanmar, Lee Young Yi Korea, Lee Jong Wha Korea, Ji ioon Kim Korea, Chris Price Aust, Jayan, India, Tae Wook Ha Korea, Harn, Thailand.

Chaired by Tui Michell

Discussed the ADEC organisation, its history, aims & wish to include more of the Asian region to make links & to offer support where possible. Our diversity was a challenge with different governments, language & challenges.

Each country could form their own organisation or network?

Conference for each country-this decided by country organisation.

? Join ADEC so there is a pool of money to send people to conferences or other support. This was not universally accepted & each country may form organisation & mail list as emailing & responding in English is a hurdle.

Some delegates were interested in ADEC conference in Brisbane & information given.

Wendy had put to-gather an IDEC email group list from 2011 & we could add to this list for those not on it. Wendy to be asked to re-send information about this list. Chris to ask Wendy.

Possibility of a page on ADEC website on ideas to support schools.  
Chris to ask Cecelia.

Next Meeting: 28<sup>th</sup> March.

**Minutes of second meeting of Australasian delegates IDEC 2012  
Caguas, Puerto Rico 28<sup>th</sup> March**

**Present:** As first meeting with addition of Iku Fujimatsu, USA & Eakpot Nimkulrat, Thailand/USA

**Apologies:** Harn, Thailand & Jayan, India.

Chaired by Tui Michell

Concept of meeting at Boulder, Colorado IDEC 2013 4<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> August for day or half a day of the delegates from Australasian area. That this would strengthen the network if we are all face-to face. Also email if possible.

Maybe to have this time at the beginning or end of conference.

Then have a session if the meeting is at the beginning of the conference to convey some of the information/ideas to the wider IDEC meeting.

? Maybe America & Europe would like to do the same & present info from their meetings.

**Ideas for this meeting:**

Introduce ourselves/schools.

What is happening in our schools?

Exchange information on our schools.

Government regulations in different countries-how does it support alternative education.

How to talk to government/politicians.

One thing that has worked well.

One thing that has been a challenge.

One thing you learnt from the above items.

Genius of Asian community that can be offered/contribute.

Possibility of teacher/student exchange.

Open spaces to discuss relevant issues.

Sth Korean will put this in their IDEC program as they think there will be a large Asian contingency.

Tui to talk to Colorado IDEC organisers

(Subsequently Tui did talk to Colorado IDEC organisers & they are keen to support this idea.)

For all of us to advertise to our colleagues IDEC in Colorado 2013 & Sth Korea in 2014 to encourage them to come.

To make them aware that a specific day or half day may be put aside in Colorado & certainly in Sth Korea to have this meeting.

### **Moe Zimmerberg's report on the IDEC in Puerto Rico:**

*Nuestra Escuela in Puerto Rico was the host for IDEC 2012, which ran from March 24 – 31, and was attended by about 800 people from over thirty different countries. Moe Zimmerberg was there and has written this report.*

Since IDEC is a conference and not an organization, each event is unique to the host's culture and needs. Therefore, the 2012 International Democratic Education Conference (IDEC) was very different from previous years.

Saturday was a 'meet and greet' for the foreign participants. We went early to the Caguas Botanical and Cultural Garden to have a chance to walk around while the organizers were setting up for registration. It was a beautiful place, full of plants both native and exotic. The artifacts of the local indigenous people were particularly interesting. The Taino were known as a peaceful people. We were just finishing our walk when the rain started, so we hurried to the registration tent. One of my favourite aspects of IDEC is the development of the friendships that we have established with people from all over the world. When we got to the tent it was filled with old friends, some we hadn't seen in years. After a few joyous hours of reunion the evening's entertainment began, despite the rain. We were treated to two local music groups performing traditional Puerto Rican music, but the most amazing music was the Afro-Caribbean drum and dance group. I was familiar with the rhythms from drumming friends of mine, but nothing to compare with this quality. What a treat! Sunday, the first 'conference' day, was filled with speeches. Usually IDECs are divided into two parts, one intended for the democratic education community and the other intended to

reach out to the general public. In Puerto Rico we had only the second part, and as such it was exceptionally successful. Among the local participants, who made up about two thirds of attendants, were the Governor's adviser for education, senior politicians bureaucrats, school principals and teachers. Derry Hannam made a great impression; more than fifty people asked for copies of his presentation. This was the best IDEC ever for him, because it clearly had so great an influence on powerful people who had not before understood the idea of democratic education. There were some amazing talks. Alicia Cabezudo told us about her experiences teaching history in Argentina during the time of a repressive authoritarian regime – that in itself was a revolutionary act. Chills ran down my spine as she described meeting a former student, now a union representative, who was there when she first defied soldiers by showing her students the pile of burning books in the schoolyard. Monday's highlight was a visit to Nuestra Escuela, our host school. Upon disembarking from the bus we were greeted by a Batucada Band right there on the street – complete with horns and singing! What a way to be welcomed! This is perhaps the school's forte; they hug and kiss every student when they arrive in the morning. Though not technically a democratic school (depending on your definition) Nuestra Escuela has done amazing things for the disenfranchised youth of Caguas – primarily through the power of love. On Tuesday, Jean-Robert Cadet told us his story of being a slave as a child in Haiti and his subsequent attempt to lead a middle-class life. The damage from the abuse, exploitation and lack of nurturing has had lifelong effects. Apparently modern slavery still exists, on the order of 300,000 children, called Restavecs, in Haiti alone. Very sad and shocking. Some decisions were also made on the future of IDEC: The 2014 conference will be in Korea, 2015 to be decided there. Also a new map has been drawn for the rotation of continents based mathematically on alternating north and south while rotating east or west, the direction determined by the location of the 2015 IDEC. We're very excited to go back to Korea; the organizers have the full support of the local city government. Wednesday was the last day – yes, a very short and packed conference. We learned about alternative education in Burma (Myanmar) and teacher training in the Netherlands influenced by Krishnamurti. After a rousing, musical closing ceremony – Puerto Rico has some great music – the heavens opened up forcing a cancellation of the outdoor performance. We were not daunted, but continued to play music inside. The next day, after the First Regional Gathering of the Americas and the Caribbean, we were treated to a spectacular modern circus show put on by the City of Caguas and performed by the local youth, complete with stilts, acrobatics, and even fireworks – a

first for IDEC. They really went all out to put on a good show, the main focus of this conference, and we hopefully had a huge impact on education in Puerto Rico.

### **CONGRATULATIONS to DR DAVID COHEN**

WHO HAS BEEN AWARDED an AM in the QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS FOR SERVICE to PROGRESSIVE and ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION, CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT and SCIENCE EDUCATION, as a RESEARCHER, EDITOR and to THE COMMUNITY



Dr David Cohen was a co-founder of Currumbena and Yinbilliko back in the late '60s and had an important mentoring role for Kinma and Elonera, the schools he regards as "his children". He has had a long association with many of us and as well as being our friend, he is one of our living treasures in his unwavering support for and commitment to alternative and progressive education and to ADEC when it began life as AAPAE. This is a great recognition of his life's work.

At the 2011 AAPAE Conference at Currumbena there was a suggestion that each school might take responsibility for an issue of the newsletter. If anyone would like to take up this offer or would like to contribute to the next one in any way please let Cec know.

Please consider becoming a member of ADEC.  
For details visit our website [www.aapae.edu.au](http://www.aapae.edu.au) or contact us

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