
Editorial

This issue of **set** comes at an exciting time in education as the draft national curriculum, incorporating the proposed key competencies, has just been released for public discussion.

Margaret Carr's article, "Learning dispositions and key competencies: a new curriculum continuity across the sectors?" traces the recommendations for curriculum reform from 2002 and explains the origins of the proposed competencies. This article also carries through one of the key themes of participant responses at the recent NZCER conference—"Key competencies: repackaging old or creating the new?"—where there were persistent comments on the need for alignment across all education sectors. Carr suggests that there is now potential for "a new continuity" between the early childhood and school sectors and provides us with her wish list for that continuity:

- closely aligned learning dispositions and key competencies
- closely connected learning environments, relationships, and images of the learner, across which the dispositions and competencies are distributed
- learners who are ready, willing, and able to critique and redesign the curriculum and the world.

To further assist discussion of the draft curriculum we have enclosed, with permission to copy, Rose Hipkins' article from **set**, issue 3, 2005: "Thinking about the key competencies in the light of the intention to foster lifelong learning".

The articles in the feature section on the topic of transition provide further food for thought about the connectedness between the various education sectors with examples of how practice can achieve this.

Other recent publications from NZCER Press provide research-based information to help schools as they prepare to implement the new curriculum. Among these are Rose Hipkins' *Learning to do Research: Challenges for students and teachers* which builds on articles previously published in **set** and provides an early exploration of how the key competencies and curriculum can work together. NZCER's new journal, *Curriculum Matters*, will provide ongoing commentary on issues and developments. Also relevant to the discussions is Rachel Bolstad's literature review *School-based Curriculum Development: Principles, processes, and practices*.

Other articles in this issue break new ground and report on topical issues. Of special note is the lead article which reports, for the first time, hand-hygiene facilities in schools and also John West-Burnham's thought-provoking piece which questions some of our ideas about school improvement.

We are now preparing the third issue of **set** for the year and look forward to bringing you further research information designed to support teaching practice.

Bev Webber
Managing editor