

# Editorial

Welcome to issue 2 of *set: Research Information for Teachers* for 2013. This issue highlights the importance of deeply knowing one's students and also knowing oneself as teacher. For me it stimulates an array of questions about student and teacher identity. Who are your students? How are they connected to the people and places around them? What has real meaning in their lives and how do they go about making meaning? Where are the points of connection between your life and the lives of your students? How do you personally relate to the material you teach? How do you learn more about yourself through your teaching and how might you make this reflexivity explicit to your students? Embedded in these questions is an acknowledgement of the critical relationship between identity and learning.

A basic teaching premise is that knowing your learners will enable you to tailor your teaching and thus enhance learning. In other words a better grasp of students' identities provides a *means* to support their learning. Central to issue 2 is a reminder that exploring students' identities is also a *goal* for learning. Many articles call for teachers to design learning opportunities both to better understand their students and to help students understand themselves better, as is promoted in the vision and values of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007). The articles in this issue suggest that teachers might aim to understand not only *what* students are capable of but also *who* they are as individuals embedded in their social and physical environments.

Mike Brown argues that outdoor education often puts students and teachers under unnecessary stress and disconnects them from their sense of place. His alternative "place-responsive" approach, developed with Ngaruawahia and Mount Maunganui secondary schools, strengthens students' (and teachers') sense of identity, connection, and responsibility. Compared with traditional programmes, place-responsive outdoor education involves more teachers, curriculum areas, and possibilities for student inquiry. Chris Brough also aims to contain teacher stress with her steps *towards* stronger models of student-centred inquiry and curriculum integration. She shows how initial steps in this direction

can help students share more of themselves in planning and decision-making processes. Deborah Fraser's powerful piece for He Whakaaro Anō melds together identity and creativity. She argues that the arts make space for "bodily, kinaesthetic, visual, haptic, and aural ways of knowing" (p. 21). Students bring their whole selves to their artistic endeavours and make unique meaning of their world and themselves through the process.

Two quite different articles could also be read for the identity theme. Rosemary Hipkins and Rachel Dingle present National Survey findings about secondary schools' use of student management systems. These systems contain the possibility for school leaders and teachers to understand individual students, student groups, and the school's entire student body in new ways. Anne Hume and team use a content representation tool to enable early career teachers, scientists, and senior teachers to share their respective expertise and develop fresh pedagogical content knowledge for senior science topics. Their collaborations may result in new recruits simultaneously building their identities as teachers and as scientists.

The focus section looks at students' linguistic and cultural diversity, and, in particular, English-language learners. Marilyn Blakeney-Williams and Nicola Daly's collaboration with two teachers illustrates the power of teaching through picture books that have personal meaning for teachers themselves. Their findings show how teachers can share meaning-making with—and amongst—students to support English-language learners' learning and cultural expression in lively classrooms. Susan Tung and Margaret Kitchen offer a case study of one English-language learner's struggle with PAT: Mathematics, showing how language and cultural demands within the test restricted the student's final score. Charles Darr's Assessment News response highlights that test developers and teachers share responsibility for ensuring that tests are designed, administered, and interpreted in appropriate ways. At the classroom level this requires some initial understanding of each student's English capabilities, but PAT: Mathematics

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can also provide a teacher with further understanding about a student's evolving mathematical and English literacy competencies.

Q&A completes the issue. Lanie Moore of Reefton Area School asks how teachers might support students to accelerate their writing capabilities. Rebecca Jesson replies that the secret is in what students already bring to the table, before writing even begins, such as their personal narratives as well as their more enlivened modes

of communication. I invite you to put forward your own question as a candidate for Q&A via an email to me at [josie.roberts@nzcer.org.nz](mailto:josie.roberts@nzcer.org.nz).

*Josie Roberts*  
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### Reference

Ministry of Education. (2007). *The New Zealand curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.