

Editorial

I am pleased to introduce the final issue of *set* for 2013. Inside you will find a range of articles that highlight the challenge and complexity of teachers' work. Each piece encourages teachers to think critically about their approach to teaching, and most describe examples or resources that teachers can draw from to trial new strategies or strengthen their current practices. The issue supports teachers across a number of learning areas, including in science, social studies, pāngarau/mathematics and English. It also informs teachers' broader responsibilities and leadership roles. The authors approach teaching as a learning profession; teachers are challenged to stretch their comfort zones to benefit student learning.

First, we present Mavis Haigh and collaborators' investigation into how student teachers' performance in their final practicum is judged to decide whether they should be permitted into the profession. Their study found a degree of ambiguity in current evaluation processes, which they see as a reflection of the complex nature of teaching and decision-making. Their methodical research process identified six key dimensions used by principals, practicum co-ordinators, associate teachers, and university educators to judge "readiness to teach" in relation to professional practices and personal attributes. The authors suggest strategies to make decisions more collaborative, transparent, and trustworthy.

Next up are three varied examples of student inquiries. All three articles offer insight into how to shape and resource inquiries in ways that deepen students' learning experiences and outcomes. John Williams and his colleagues write about inquiry-based learning in secondary science and discuss the unique opportunities enabled by e-networked tools. Their findings highlight teachers' own learning journeys as they developed confidence in teaching science through inquiry.

The next two articles on social inquiry and appreciative inquiry could encourage teachers to critically consider how they and their students might best construct questions to guide inquiries. Bronwyn Wood explains the power of social inquiries by drawing teachers' attention to the vital craft of question formation

in order to maximise learning outcomes related to informational and transformational goals in social studies. Wood's contribution responds to Boyd and Hipkins' discussion about "hybrid inquiries" featured in *set* issue 3, 2012. Rachel McNae and Janine McKay outline appreciative inquiry—a collaborative model for learning that originates from outside the formal education sector. Appreciative inquiry challenges the "problem focus" which can sometimes infuse classroom inquiries, and instead offers a form of questioning that redirects attention to strengths in order to open possibilities. The authors encourage teachers to transfer principles from youth–adult partnerships and appreciative inquiry into lessons and learning areas.

Inquiry questions are also the topic discussed in Q&A, this time in relation to teaching-as-inquiry. Deputy principal Claire Amos explains why teachers should share their own teacher-inquiry questions with their students, despite a concern that some teachers may hold about making their investigation less valid if they do this.

The fourth teaching and learning piece, by Ngāwera Hāwera and Marilyn Taylor, presents a case study of a researcher–teacher partnership set up to develop new approaches to teaching geometry in a kura kaupapa Māori with reference to Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori (National Standards). They show how teachers can rise to the challenge of simultaneously developing students' knowledge of mathematics, language, and culture within pāngarau programme planning.

Jacky Burgon and Helena Barwick highlight the vital role that teachers can play in supporting children with special education needs to transition successfully from early childhood education to school. Their case studies of transitioning students and whānau illustrate the types of school-based communications and activities that can help realise the goal of a fully inclusive education system within New Zealand.

Two final pieces give useful insight into the thinking that feeds into two recently released classroom resources. In He Whakaaro Anō Rosemary Hipkins discusses the decision to adopt the term "capabilities" rather than "competencies" in titling a new resource centred on the

EDITORIAL

Nature of Science strand in science. Her commentary aims to broaden teachers' approach to *The New Zealand Curriculum's* key competencies (Ministry of Education, 2007). Assessment News presents the thinking behind the latest PAT: Punctuation and Grammar assessment from the New Zealand Council for Educational Research. Jan Eyre and Verena Watson explain how teachers might use the test and teacher support materials to enrich their own understanding of punctuation and grammar with reference to what matters most for students to effectively make meaning and "get" how language works.

The demands of learning-while-teaching are great. I hope that you find it enlivening to refresh your own knowledge and practice throughout the school year. No doubt, at times, it can also be daunting and

exhausting. The *set* team wishes you all the best for a well-deserved holiday. Season's greetings and a happy new year! Next year will mark *set's* 40th anniversary of publishing research-based information for teachers across Aotearoa. We look forward to celebrating with readers and authors.

Josie Roberts
Editor

Reference

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