A MESSAGE FROM YOUR BOARD

TACKLING THE ‘BIG FIVE’ CHALLENGES OF SCHOOL EDUCATION

Teachers and schools are faced with a myriad of challenges. Pick up any newspaper and you’d be forgiven for running a mile from the task of school and education improvement. But which issues are the important issues?

Geoff Masters recently flagged what he refers to as the ‘big five’ challenges facing school education including:

- Identifying and meeting the needs of students on trajectories of low achievement
- Raising the professional status of teaching
- Designing a 21st-century curriculum
- Reducing disparities between Australian schools
- Promoting flexible learning arrangements focused on growth.

You can read the full article at www.teachermagazine.com.au/geoff-masters/article/big-five-challenges-in-school-education

All of these challenges provide a context for the work of PETAQ.

PETAQ is aware that achieving literacy success is critical to meeting the needs of students on trajectories of low achievement and is connected to social and emotional wellbeing, academic achievement and participation. PETAQ’s work is focused on the explicit teaching of language and literacy so that students can use, create and enjoy the wide variety of texts they will come into contact with. We share a vision that language and literacy will open doors for students and we want to make sure that all students have the key. PETAQ is a strong and vocal advocate for the teaching profession and works hard to ensure that teachers are recognised as professionals with expert knowledge and specialised skills. PETAQ’s community work is with teachers in a range of contexts and from a range of backgrounds and we celebrate the diversity of our profession.

In providing academically rigorous resources which bridge contemporary educational theory and classroom practice, PETAQ is fostering a community of expert professionals with knowledge and skills that are connected to positive outcomes for all students.

Part of our commitment to connecting high-quality research and classroom pedagogy is the new PETAQ Research Grant. The successful candidates will study how changes in classroom teacher’s interaction practices will lead to improved opportunities and experiences for students’ oral language and literacy development. An important part of this research is the strong involvement of teachers. This promotes the idea of teachers not just as research informed, but, importantly, research informing. Classroom teachers will work with project team members to develop action research studies that examine and develop talk and interaction in lessons. The outcomes of this and future PETAQ-funded research will directly inform curriculum and pedagogy.

A deep knowledge about language and how it works supports effective English and literacy teaching that is responsive to student needs. PETAQ knows that disparities exist within and between Australian schools. Students from literate, text-rich backgrounds bring to school some prior knowledge about language and how it works, supported by an awareness of patterns in language that they can apply to their own texts. Some students will not have had the opportunity and exposure to texts to implicitly develop these skills. PETAQ works towards closing this gap through professional learning and the research based texts produced for teachers.

PETAQ is committed to working with teachers to ensure they are ready to equip students with the 21st century skills they will need to engage with texts including critical and creative thinking, collaborating and communicating with others.

As Masters notes, it’s easy to despair when faced with the seemingly immense tasks facing schools and teachers, however, PETAQ is committed to tackling these challenges head on and we know that with collective focus and energy we can make a difference.

Sean Box,
PETAQ Board Director

NEWS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

QLD

The explicit improvement agendas of many Queensland schools continue to centre on reading although, in some schools, the focus is widening to encompass writing. Data, and more specifically evidence of student learning gathered through school-based assessments, are being used with increasing confidence to inform differentiation and local decision making in areas such as professional development and resource allocation. 2016 will see the establishment of a statewide reading centre to provide specialist advice to teachers and parents on how to teach and support reading, including for students with special needs and/or from diverse backgrounds and the development of an evidence hub through which evidence of effective practice in Queensland state schools will be shared.

VIC

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority recently released the Victorian Curriculum F-10. The Victorian Curriculum F-10 is the new name for the final version of the AusVELS curriculum that incorporates the Australian Curriculum in a way that reflects Victorian standards and priorities. Information about how English in the Victoria Curriculum differs from AusVELS English can be found at www.vcaa.vic.edu.au

The new curriculum is part of the Victorian government’s Education State program, which includes other initiatives focused on curriculum implementation and support for early years literacy. Details on each of the initiatives are available at www.education.vic.gov.au/educationstate

NSW

In response to the School Excellence Framework departmental schools in NSW have been focusing on the differentiation of the teaching of English and utilising student data to provide targeted literacy instruction. Many schools’ strategic plans have also focused on increasing inter-school collaboration in the development of high quality English programs. Departmental schools have been able to improve the English learning support they provide for students with additional needs as some of the Goski funding has been allocated through the Resource Allocation Model. 2016 will also see teacher professional development allocations increase and a per capita allocation of funds for schools. All school systems in NSW have begun phasing in standards-based pay models which are aligned with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

WAL

In 2015 Western Australia has been focusing on the age appropriate teaching of the five elements of effective reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. This has given rise to interest in the reading/writing link and effective writing instruction, both of which are expected to be a strong focus for schools in 2016.

NEW PUBLICATIONS ENCLOSED

- A Closer Look at Spelling in the Primary Classroom
- PETAQ Paper 199: Learning Vocabulary is Context

All members can access digital versions online.
NEW! MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES 2016

Following extensive member feedback and after a professional membership review, PETAA is making some changes to its membership structures in order to reflect the changing nature of the primary teaching community and to better support its members and the wider education community.

As part of the changes, PETAA is also introducing two new special membership categories:

- **Professional Membership—New Graduate.**
  Supporting recently graduated teachers

- **Professional Membership—Student.**
  Supporting pre-service teachers during their studies

Other membership categories are:

- **Professional Membership**
- **Professional Membership—Digital**
- **School Membership**
- **Remote/Small School Membership**

Take a look at the attached Professional Learning brochure or visit the Membership section of the PETAA website to learn more about these changes and the category benefits and entitlements.

BOOKS FOR VANUATU

Following numerous donations of books from many schools around Australia, the books have safely arrived at their destination(s). Once again PETAA thanks everyone who contributed to this worthy action.

PETAA and the students in Vanuatu are also indebted to two groups who donated their financial and logistically support to get the books to their destination:

- The McGuire family of Sydney, particularly Ed McGuire, for arrangements ex Brisbane and coordinating destination dispatch.
- Ligare Printers (OPUS Group) for taking care of transporting the books from Sydney to Brisbane. Ligare is one of the regular printers of PETAA books.

PETAA CHRISTMAS OFFICE CLOSURE

The PETAA Office will be closed from 5pm Friday 18 December 2015 and will reopen on Wednesday 13 January 2016.

The PETAA Board and Staff thank you for your support throughout 2015 and wish you, your partners, your family and friends a safe and happy holiday season. PETAA looks forward to providing you with further professional learning support in 2016.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING 2016

Search Professional Learning on PETAA’s website for the range of 2016 Professional Learning offerings including after school and full day workshops, tailored Professional Learning, school development days and soon to be released, online courses.

PETA 2016 Day Conferences: Assessment into Practice

Dates/Destinations:
- April 2016
  - Brisbane, Melbourne
- May 2016
  - Sydney, Perth, Adelaide
- June 2016
  - Parramatta

These full day conferences will engage attendees in rich conversation on assessment in English through plenary addresses, interactive workshops and opportunities to share ideas and connect with other teachers.

NEW! AUTHOR AND PRESENTERS VIDEO PROFILES

Meet the authors who write for PETAA and learn more about their books. Hear from the PETAA presenters who deliver courses for PETAA and gain valuable insights into their popular professional learning courses.

AUTUMN PUBLICATIONS 2016

**For the Love of Reading**
Kaye Lowe
ISBN: 978-1-925132-29-8 (Printed edn)
ISBN: 978-1-925132-30-4 (ePub edn)

This book supports teachers to develop effective reading practices that address readers’ needs and to help ‘struggling readers’ become lifelong, independent and responsible readers. Kaye Lowe examines the world of the struggling reader from multiple interconnected perspectives.

PETA 202 Paper 202

Visit www.petaa.edu.au to view and explore PETAA publications, professional learning and purchase online.