

Co-Convenors Report to AGM

November 2012



This past year was another busy year for the Inclusive Education Action Group (IEAG) and certainly bore out the prediction in last year's report that re-election of the National Government was "likely to herald turbulent times for education". National Standards remains controversial, while new Government education initiatives – league tables, charter schools, performance pay, class size increases – attracted huge opposition across the education sector. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the year revealed few new initiatives in the area of inclusive or special education, with the exception of the proposal to close residential special schools.

IEAG Governing Committee

This year's Governing Committee was Ian Armstrong and Andrea Graham (Co-convenors, Kris Appleby, Ally Attwell, Matt Frost, Trish Grant, Dr. Jude MacArthur, Dr Bernadette Macartney, David Matthews, Dr. Gill Rutherford, and Vivienne Thompson. Tony Paine was co-opted to the role of Treasurer.

The Governing Committee extends its grateful thanks to Sarah Berman, IEAG Executive Officer, for her efforts and commitment to our organization. Sarah continues to provide huge support to the Governing Committee and has worked prodigiously across a whole range of areas to keep IEAG running and growing. Strategic planning, financial management, website development and management, fundraising, workshop support, and Governing Committee secretariat services, membership and correspondence are just some of the many areas where Sarah provides invaluable support.

Inclusive Education workshops

This year IEAG expanded its program to offer inclusive education workshops focused on advancing thinking and action on inclusive education. The workshops, facilitated by Dr Jude MacArthur and Dr Gill Rutherford were held in Dunedin, Manukau, Tauranga, Whangarei, Northwest Auckland and Tauranga (for GSE management and staff). All workshops, except for Manukau, were held in partnership with IHC and Ministry of Education.

There was strong interest in the workshops which were attended by over 400 hundred principals, deputy principals, SENCOs, teachers, teacher aides, MOE specialists, parents and community workers. Feedback has been extremely positive with many participants commenting on how useful the workshops were offering helpful advice on inclusive practices. For some, the workshops may have challenged special education thought and practice. Further workshops are planned.

IEAG also delivered a workshop for 50 North Auckland kindergarten teachers, facilitated by Dr Jude MacArthur and Dr Bernadette Macartney.

Conferences

The Otago University Disability Studies: Every Body In conference in November 2011 was a highlight of the year. IEAG held its AGM at the conference and many Governing Committee members and IEAG members attended and participated in the conference, with many giving presentations. An IEAG presentation "A prick in the Minister's side; Working towards inclusive education in NZ through voluntary advocacy" outlined the genesis and history of IEAG.

IEAG presence at education and disability events

IEAG held a trade stand at the Auckland Disability Provider's Network Big Event at Ellerslie - a 2 day expo on disability. IEAG distributed a variety of inclusive education resources to visitors to the trade stand. Most interest was from parents.

IEAG also held a trade stand, shared with IHC, at the School Trustees Association conference at Auckland in July 2011. The conference was attended by over 600 school trustee delegates. IEAG distributed a range of inclusive education and disability rights resources to school trustees including an IEAG-developed resource called "Supporting your school to be inclusive - for BoTs".

Stakeholder and community relationships

IEAG is becoming increasingly well known within the education and disability sectors and accordingly is being invited to participate, partner and communicate with a range of organizations to provide advice and expertise, and share information.

Over the past year IEAG has provided expertise to the Ministry of Education Special Education reference groups, to the NZ Council for Educational Research Inclusion Smart Tool reference group, and to the DPA Education for All lobby group.

IEAG has linked with education sector groups such as NZEI, PPTA and STA to build relationships, to provide inclusive education advice and information, and to work together in areas of mutual interest such as opposition to charter schools.

Submissions

During the year IEAG provided submissions on a number of Government initiatives including:

- The proposed closure of the 4 residential schools and the development of a student wrap-around service.
- The review of Career, Information, Advice, Guidance and Education (CIAGE).
- The Early Childhood Education Taskforce Consultation.
- The Draft Cabinet paper on the Ministry of Education's proposed complaints and resolutions process.

These submissions are available on the IEAG website.

Membership

Over the past year IEAGs membership has grown by 40 to approximately 200 (as of June 2012). IEAG now has opportunities to better mobilize the membership, perhaps through regional networks, to inform strategy and contribute to IEAG initiatives.

Acknowledgements

The Co-Convenors would like to thank the organizations that have supported and funded IEAG through grants, the IEAG Governing Committee, the Executive Officer, Sarah Berman, and the members and volunteers who have generously supported our work.

IEAG work was made possible through grants and funding in the past year from:

- IHC Foundation (workshops)
- Todd Foundation (Executive Officer wages)
- ASB Community Trust (website)
- COGS Hutt Valley, North Shore/Rodney, Waitakere, Auckland, Dunedin, Manukau (operating costs)
- Making a Difference Fund (e-learning)
- Lotteries Community (operating costs)

We acknowledge with gratitude the funding received from these organizations. This has allowed us to pursue our strategic goals, continue our work and employ an Executive Officer.

IEAG extends its thanks to the following people and organizations for their generous, voluntary support

- IHC, who have partnered with IEAG to run inclusive education workshops.
- IHC Advocacy, who have supported IEAG in many ways including sharing a stand at the School Trustees Association Conference, providing us with a meeting room and support for committee meetings, and helping with press release distribution.
- The Ministry of Education, who partnered with IEAG to run inclusive education workshops.
- Ben Stewart for website hosting.
- All the IEAG volunteers for staffing our stalls at conferences, expos and seminars, presenting at conferences, delivering seminars, attending focus and stakeholder groups on behalf of IEAG, writing articles for journals, writing submissions and just helping in many ways. Special thanks go to our deeply committed and generous workshop presenters Jude MacArthur, Bernadette Macartney and Gill Rutherford for giving freely of their time and expertise.

Co-Convenors IEAG

Ian Armstrong

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