

Co-Convenors Report to AGM

November 2013



This past year was another busy year for the Inclusive Education Action Group (IEAG). We also had a birthday and turned five years old in May! We have tried to keep up with the invitations for IEAG to be represented on Ministry of Education advisory, reference and project groups. Our other emphasis has been on developing relationships and working collaboratively with disability sector groups such as CCS Disability Action, IHC, the New Zealand Down Syndrome Association, DPA and People First. We have begun developing regional inclusive education networks for IEAG members and other concerned interested people. Starting networks through supporting initial meetings is a priority for the next year. We hope that network groups will give members and others opportunities to share their challenges and to support each other locally as well as feed engage in IEAG projects and opportunities.

IEAG Governing Committee

This year's Governing Committee was Ian Armstrong, Bernadette Macartney, Denise Astill, Ally Attwell, Trish Grant, Debbie Rickard, and Gill Rutherford. Tony Paine was co-opted to the role of Treasurer.

Many thanks go to all committee members for your contributions over the past year. Special (!) thanks to Ian Armstrong for his long, tireless and extensive commitment to IEAG admirable performance as Co-convenor of IEAG's governing committee for the past five years! Thanks you for your continued contributions Ian, particularly as a representative for IEAG and advocate for inclusion on advisory groups and your relationships with key people and organizations. We may miss your voice of calm and reason at IEAG committee meetings!

Gill Rutherford is also standing down from the committee this year after 3 years. Gill has and will, along with Jude MacArthur, continue to contribute to IEAG's professional development, and inclusive education workshops. Gill and Jude thank you for your work and support for IEAG over many years. Also thanks to Debbie Rickard who has been on our committee over this past year.

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, developing e-learning modules, fundraising, workshop support, and Governing Committee secretariat services, membership and correspondence are just some of the many areas where Sarah provides invaluable support. Thank you once again for your energy, commitment and work for IEAG, Sarah.

Inclusive Education workshops

This year IEAG continued with its program of 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 Invercargill and Central Otago. So far there has been a strong interest in our workshops which have been 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 in offering helpful advice on inclusive practices. For some, the workshops may have challenged special education thought and practice. Further workshops are planned.

Presentations

International Disability Studies in Education (DSE) conference, Christchurch, May 2013

IEAG members contributed to the work of organising the conference. We also had an information stall, member attendance and paper presentations, and a very successful IEAG-People First Youth Education Panel. Thanks to the panelists Shane McInroe, Craig Bellis, James Skinner and Olivia Bovey, members of People First Christchurch, Marg Matheson who assisted the panel, and to Christchurch IEAG member Nancy Higgins who facilitated. The DSE panel led to a further presentation at the Ministry of Education Inclusive Education Capability Building Project in Wellington later in the year.

Autism NZ Conference, Auckland, September 2012

In September 2012 IEAG presented a parents and young people's panel at the Autism NZ Conference in Auckland. Parents and students spoke to the conference on why inclusion was important to them and how schools can make it work.

Resources

IEAG co-authored *Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on Schooling for Disabled Children and Young People* with the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE, United Kingdom). This is an 8 page A4 **brochure** answering questions about special and inclusive education. It was initially developed for the 2012 School Trustees Association (NZSTA) annual conference. This resource is available on our website and continues to be printed and distributed. Thanks to Jude MacArthur and Gill Rutherford for your writing.

E-Learning Podcasts of Learning Better Together presentations and parent panel discussions - were recorded and prepared for an E-learning module which will be launched on our website early next year. NZSL, captioning and a web framework are being developed. Thanks to the Making a Difference Fund for their support for this project.

Website – Our new website went live on 16 Oct 2012. Feedback has been that the new site is visually pleasing, easy to navigate, disability friendly and information dense. We also now have an IEAG **Facebook** page with 115 followers. There has been lots of international as well as local visitors and interest.

IEAG presence at education and disability events

School Trustees Association Annual Conference

IEAG held a trade stand, shared with IHC, at the School Trustees Association conference at Wellington in July 2012. The conference was attended by over 700 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 Boards of Trustees (BOTs).

IHC Symposium on Human Rights

On 28 September 2012 IHC hosted a symposium on human rights. Many IEAG members attended. Keynote addresses were given by Paul Gibson, Human Rights Commissioner, and Professor Roger Slee who are both strong supporters of IEAG.

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 (MOE) Special Education reference groups, the NZ Council for Educational Research Inclusive Practices Tool reference group, the MOE Inclusive Education Capability Building Project Sector Advisory Group, the Disabled People's Assembly (DPA) Education for All lobby group, and the Special Education School Transport Assistance (SESTA) advisory group to the Minister.

IEAG continues to link 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:

- The MOE's Review of **Career Information, Guidance, Advice and Education Discussion**. Thanks to Vivienne Thompson for organising this.
- IEAG submitted a submission on the **Residential Special Schools Consultation**. Thanks to Bernadette and Ian for organising this.
- The **Education Amendment Bill (no 4)** re IEAG's concerns about the establishment of Charter Schools and the impact on disabled students. IEAG also gave an oral submission to the Education and Science Select Committee hearing. Thank you Bernadette for your help with this.
- **Special Assessment for NCEA**

Membership

In June this year we had 258 members. IEAG is currently growing by about one member a week. We have been and are developing more opportunities to better engage with the membership through regional networks. This includes extending ways in which members can 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:

- Todd Foundation
- IHC Foundation
- COGS (Auckland, Wellington, Manukau, Waitakere, Dunedin, Tauranga)
- Lion Foundation
- Lotteries Community
- Making a Difference Fund
- George Sevicke Jones Estate
- Four Winds Foundation

Other organisations to thank:

- Trish Grant and IHC Advocacy for continued support in so many ways, including with logistics, providing meeting venues, partnering in delivering seminars, support in hosting the School Trustees Association Stand, their fantastic resources (e.g. Learning Better Together), and for advocating for inclusive education in Government, education, disability and community forums.
- CCS Disability Action – making their meeting rooms available.
- People First - Nga Tangata Tuatahi
- Wellington City Council – making their meeting rooms available.

Individuals to thank:

- Neil Rothbart from Chelbrit Professional Accountants for support in reviewing our financial statements.
- Jude and Gill for the workshops and E-learning module presentation.
- Bernadette for the many conference presentations and networking groups organised.
- Denise, Ian, and Bernadette for all the meetings attended on IEAG's behalf.

Naku noa, na,

Ian Armstrong & Bernadette Macartney (Co-Convenors IEAG)