

**NZEALS Waikato Branch  
Presentation from Jane Gilbert  
June 2008**

It was a pleasure to welcome so many NZEALS members and friends to an evening with Jane Gilbert, held at Waikato Diocesan School for Girls. Jane is chief researcher at the Centre for Educational Research (NZCER) in Wellington, and at this presentation she introduced her latest research topic: **Teachers as 21st century learners? Building capacity for a transformative education system.**

Jane raised some important considerations for the future of teaching. She reminded us of the implications of the 21<sup>st</sup> century 'Knowledge Age', and all that entails for society as a whole, and education in particular. She also shared some of the issues this presents for learners in the Knowledge Age: that they are interested in constructing knowledge alongside their teachers, and in making global connections with their knowledge in real-world, relevant contexts; that building relationships and developing left-brain competencies are more important than traditional right-brain, disciplinary learning; and that they are preparing for unknown futures, featuring technology, jobs and knowledge that has not yet been invented.

Much of this is familiar to us in education, and we have already begun tinkering with external factors, such as school structures, curriculum systems, assessment models and community connections. But Jane's challenge to us is to look internally, at teachers and teaching itself. Can teachers who are trained in the Industrial Age become teachers for the Knowledge Age? Tinkering, and adding more, needs to stop: it is time for a transformation in thinking about teaching. As Jane says,

“Transformation in thinking requires people to change, not just the way they *behave*, not just the way they *feel*, but the way they know – not just *what* they know, but the *way* they know. They need not just to add new things, but to think about – and see - things in new ways. Doing this produces uncertainty, confusion, loss of control; it requires people to go into a threshold, ‘no-place’ kind of space, and to tolerate confusion & ‘not knowing’.

Jane went on to outline what she proposes the 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher does need: knowledge of learning, the brain and pedagogy – not just of disciplines or subjects; relationships to be at the heart of their work; project management and portfolio approaches to their work; community liaison and connectedness; facilitation skills. In this model, Jane asks, “could it be that teachers are being asked to build competencies in students that they themselves do not yet have ... ???”

Our session with Jane was clearly provocative, and presented a challenge for educators across the sectors. This new body of research is going to identify strengths and weaknesses in the recruitment and retention of 21<sup>st</sup> century teachers in New Zealand, and give us all pause to consider our readiness to be life-long learners ourselves.

**Juliette Hayes**  
**Waikato Branch President**

