

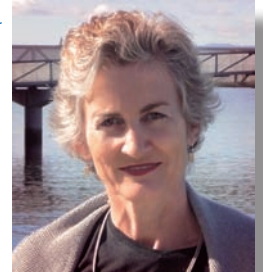


leading lights

grow your leadership potential

Edition 3, 2011

President's Comment



Kate Thornton
President

Nga mihi nui ki a koutou,

It has been a busy few months for NZEALS, and since my last message progress has continued on different aspects of the strategic plan goals and actions. The new website is living up to expectations although we have yet to take advantage of its full potential. Branches have been updating their pages and forthcoming events and we look forward to build on and strengthen this method of communication with branch members. Copies of the *Leading Lights* are also now available online with selected articles publicly available.

NZEALS Council recently agreed to offer graduates of the First Time Principals' programme free branch membership for the year following their graduation, and Graeme Macann, the Auckland branch president, promoted this package at their residential course in July. It is hoped that this offer will encourage many principals to become involved with NZEALS on a long term basis. We are also promoting the Aspiring Principal's programme through our website. Support for principals' programmes such as these raises the issue of how we provide equivalent support for leaders in the early childhood and tertiary sectors. The reality is that there are currently no formal leadership development programmes for leaders in these sectors, hence the current focus on increasing participation by principals.

Unlike school principals, those in leadership positions in early childhood education (ECE) services are unlikely to have received any formal preparation for their leadership roles. The recent ECE task force report, *An Agenda for Amazing Children*, has again signalled the need for leadership development programmes in the New Zealand ECE sector. These were first promoted in the early childhood strategic plan, *Nga Huarahi Arataki*, released in 2002, however, the action of providing leadership development programmes

was never implemented. Leadership in ECE is a focus of this edition of *Leading Lights* and also of the next edition of the *Journal of Educational Leadership Policy and Practice* of which I was guest editor. There is a relative lack of published research focusing on leadership in ECE, both nationally and internationally, and there seems to have been a perception from those influencing policy directions that professional leadership is not as important in ECE as in the school sector. This is far from the truth as professional leaders in ECE have a significant influence on the quality of the service as evidenced by research and emphasised in Education Review Office reports.

those working in ECE. Organisations such as NZEALS play an important role in promoting leadership in the ECE sector and can assist in highlighting the commonalities rather than the differences in leadership across the sectors.

One of the strengths of NZEALS is of course its cross-sector nature and in addition to our branch meetings our conference provides a forum for leaders from all the different sectors to meet, network and learn together. Planning for next year's NZEALS conference in Tauranga in the Easter break is well advanced. I had the opportunity to visit the conference venue recently and was very impressed with the location and the facilities. If you haven't

"This conference is not just for researchers and three of the strands in particular provide dissemination opportunities for students and practitioners."

Historically there has been unwillingness from those in the ECE sector to engage with the concept of leadership. This absence of engagement has been attributed to a number of factors including a lack of identification with commonly accepted notions of leadership and a lack of support for leadership development. The heroic model of leadership obviously does not fit the early childhood sector, which has a non-hierarchical structure and is dominated by women. The more recent literature on conceptions of leadership in the wider field of educational leadership suggests frameworks more in line with the collaborative leadership approaches favoured in the ECE sector, so these differences are becoming less significant. The variety of articles in both this edition and the forthcoming journal highlight current research and practice around leadership and will be of interest to a wider audience than just

been to an NZEALS conference before then please make this your first, and if you are a frequent attendee, please consider presenting this time. There are many different presentation options from completed papers, workshops, round table discussions and 10 minute short bursts. Details of all these are on the website along with the programme strands. This conference is not just for researchers and three of the strands in particular provide dissemination opportunities for students and practitioners. Secondary school students, student teachers and educational leaders are all invited to share their perspectives on some aspect of their leadership practice. I look forward very much to the professional conversations around leadership practice that this will encourage.

E noho ra,
Kate Thornton