



Finalist 'Best Teaching with ICT'

Name: Kerri Thompson,

School: Tamatea Intermediate School, Napier

Name of ICT activity: #NZreadaloud

1. What is the Teaching with ICT activity that you want to be considered for the award?

The teaching with ICT activity I want to be considered for is my creation and implementation across Aotearoa of #NZreadaloud. This is a collaborative literacy initiative aimed at Year 6, 7 and 8 across New Zealand where classes all read the same book over the same time frame and connect via Edmodo and Twitter to carry out online literacy discussions. It is like taking part in literacy circles - but online! Teachers are flattening the walls of their classrooms and are 'virtually' connecting their learners.

#NZreadaloud promotes New Zealand authors writing stories with characters and settings which our learners can relate to. #NZreadaloud promotes collaboration and connections - it creates an awareness in our learners that 'the world is bigger than them'.

In Term 1 we started with 9 connected classes. Term 2 saw it grow to 23 teachers and classrooms. When Term 3 started we had 52 teachers and classes connecting from all parts of New Zealand...from Whangarei to Christchurch. At this stage #NZreadaloud happens 3 times a year...one book during Term 1, 2, and 3 leaving Term 4 for participation in the Global Read Aloud; although a recent survey at the conclusion of #NZreadaloud3 has revealed many teachers are keen to do one in Term 4!

The aim is for #NZreadaloud to grow to include books at all levels of the Primary School similar to the Global Read Aloud. However, where we differ is I am running #NZreadaloud throughout the year - with one read aloud happening during the first 3 Terms!

Here is a link to a #TeachMeetNZ presentation I did in July which explains #NZreadaloud with visuals.
<https://youtu.be/rOMI2WWxd9A>

2. Why did you choose to use this activity?

The reason I chose to start #NZreadaloud came from the inspiration I got when my class participated in the Global Read Aloud (GRA) in 2014. This is a worldwide initiative started back in 2010 by Pernille Ripp which happens once a year. During the Global Read Aloud teachers connect with others around the world and discuss one book over a 6 week time frame. The platform for collaboration is Edmodo - although there are twitter chats, Skyping, Google Hangouts, and Blogging which all become platforms for connecting and collaborating.

After my involvement in 2014 with GRA I felt this was the way to go with the future of literacy and saw an opportunity to develop a New Zealand version which focused on Kiwi authors and stories. The power of connecting with other learners outside the walls of our own classroom has been mind-blowing. Not only are students learning that 'the world is bigger than them' but they have an opportunity to build their understanding of a text collaboratively. Teachers also have an opportunity to teach collaboratively through the student groups set up in Edmodo.

The other reason #NZreadaloud came about was a desire to motivate and engage my more reluctant readers. How can I help these kids know the joy and feeling of getting 'lost in a story'? How can I

motivate them to read independently for enjoyment? How can I show them comprehension strategies in an authentic context?

As I teach Year 7 the book choices so far this year have been aimed at this level. I do receive suggestions via a Google Form on the blog. I have a particular criteria in mind for the books we read aloud - they need to be written by a NZ author, not too lengthy, have an action/adventure/suspense element to the storyline, ideally a male or female protagonist who is around the same age as the audience, and lastly have content which allows for students to carry out further research into something which has caught their attention from the story. The aim is for #NZreadaloud to spread to other levels of the Primary sector once it gets established and I look into organisational considerations. Having found some willing teachers who are prepared to get on board to help facilitate the move into all age groups, we hope to offer books to suit ALL levels of Primary school as of Term 1 2016.

3. How did you implement and use this activity?

The very first thing I did was create a blog <https://newzealandreadaloud.wordpress.com/> as this was the best way to put all the necessary information in one place for everyone to see.

I also used Twitter as the MAIN platform for finding interested teachers; as I believe for a teacher who wishes students to be connected learners comes from knowing the power of being a connected educator.

After the first two Terms I created a Facebook Group so teachers involved had a place to ask questions and share anything from their classes and simply as a 'go-to place for whatever teachers need for #NZreadaloud: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1736839579876455/>

We all learnt how to use Edmodo and I created screencasts for teachers to follow if they needed extra help. I assigned 'team leaders' to all the groups which had 5 or 6 teachers/classes together. Team leaders created smaller groups within their Edmodo group where teachers put their students into. This is where the learning discussions take place. Team leaders assign a teacher each week to be on 'task duty' - this means every teacher has an opportunity to decide the reading tasks which all the kids will do. This part of #NZreadaloud has been great as students see teachers collaborating too. Teachers make themselves 'visible' in Edmodo as often as they can to reply, respond, and comment on all the students' contributions. This is what makes #NZreadaloud a powerful collaborative part of the literacy programme - students are constructing knowledge together. During each of the #NZreadaloud's there have been twitter chats taking place too... with students coming up with questions for discussion. Twitter has been another easy yet powerful way to connect our learners and share ideas.

4. What learning outcomes has it achieved for you and your class?

The learning outcomes have been massive. Students are sharing their understanding, ideas, opinions, and thoughts with others using digital platforms...they are co-constructing knowledge. Learners are contributing to literary discussions, extending their vocabulary, and developing their comprehension strategies. #NZreadaloud is providing authentic learning experiences such as our Skype with the author Susan Brocker <http://theone6.blogspot.co.nz/2015/06/sticky-learning.html> and one with Park Ranger Mel at Yellowstone Park <http://theone6.blogspot.co.nz/2015/06/park-ranger-mel.html> were highlights of #NZreadaloud2. #NZreadaloud seamlessly integrates digital technology into classroom programmes. Students are taking learning into their own hands by researching information which they find interesting as it comes up in the story. Students are learning HOW to use online learning platforms like Edmodo and twitter. Reluctant readers are showing interest in reading and choosing to read independently more often. Alongside all of this Students are learning the importance of digital citizenship and are respectful of their footprint they are leaving.

The best place to go to read about the impact of #NZreadaloud on teachers and learners are the blog pages “What the teachers say” and “What the kids say”. In these pages on the blog you will be able to read testimonials and comments which demonstrate the success of this initiative.

The best place to go to see evidence of the learning happening is the blog also. I have posted examples at the conclusion of each #NZreadaloud <https://newzealandreadaloud.wordpress.com/>

Here is the link to a blog post I did on our class blog:
<http://theone6.blogspot.co.nz/2015/07/nzreadaloud3.html>

Here is a link to a blog post when we learnt about the 'viola':
<http://theone6.blogspot.co.nz/2015/08/smooth-criminal.html>

Here is a link to a 'movie trailer' some of my students created after reading Night Vision by Ella West:
<https://youtu.be/i8Vtc4Pyl-U>

There have been many learning outcomes for myself as a learner too! I have learnt how to manage and organise 52 educators during this collaborative project. I have learnt how to do a 'screencast'! I have continued on my journey to build my confidence and proudly but nervously shared #NZreadaloud at a TeachMeet GHO. Here is the link for this presentation:
<https://youtu.be/rOMI2WWxd9A>

I am continually learning about seamless ways to infuse technology into literacy and have recently discovered WriteAbout.com which is a sharing platform for writing. I am also developing my passion for integrated learning through #NZreadaloud as during the 6 weeks we are collaborating the learning takes off in numerous directions - directed by the students. This responsive style of way of running a classroom programme really suits how today's learners learn – it becomes meaningful and relevant.