

WHY A JOINT ETAI-ETAS ISSUE? From the Initiators of the Idea

Professional development needs no longer to be confined to the four walls of a staffroom. In recent years, teachers have taken to Twitter and blogging to share and express ideas, opinions and lesson plans. Facebook is another platform where teachers from across the globe form professional networks in order to share resources and discuss education issues. We are both members of at least eight Facebook groups with the acronyms EFL or ESOL in the titles: IATEFL, Blogging for EFL teachers, ESOL Teachers Worldwide to name but a few.

James himself is an example of how professional development and involvement in professional networks transcends geographical boundaries: he is the President of the Belgian English Language Teachers Association (BELTA) and a contributing editor of ETAS Journal living all the while in Costa Rica and coordinating international projects at the click of a mouse. Recently BELTA under James's direction, joined forces with TESL Toronto to deliver a first web conference jointly produced by two teachers' associations from different continents. It was attended by teachers from more than 30 countries from around the world. James' request to contribute an article for ETAS Journal was met with Leo's counter-suggestion "Why one article? Let's put out the whole issue together!" This is how the idea of a joint ETAI-ETAS publication came about.

Then the process of selection started. What content from ETAI Forums would Swiss readers find interesting? What articles written by Swiss authors would be of interest to Israeli teachers? Ceri and Renee reviewed a lot of articles and edited the content. In the meantime, ETAS president JoAnn Salvisberg came to Israel to attend and present at the annual summer ETAI conference (In a way, ETAI owes ETAS a favour and we are hoping an ETAI representative will soon attend one of ETAS professional development days.). And here we are, proudly presenting the first collaborative effort between ETAI and ETAS. Soon, Swiss readers will be holding in their hands a copy of ETAS Journal with articles from Israel. Some of the Israeli 'talent' featured in the special ETAI issue of the ETAS Forum will include Amanda Caplan, Julia Schlam Salman, Gunther Volk, Adele Raemer, Karen White and other frequent ETAI Forum contributors. While Eleanor Satlow, ETAI chair, will introduce the content of this special ETAI Forum, we just wanted to mention that two contributors to this issue, Vicky Loras and Naomi Epstein – both active bloggers and inspiring educators – also met online and became friends. They are another testament to how social media helps forge communities of learning across geographical borders.

We hope you enjoy our special ETAI Forum / ETAS Journal issue.

Leo Selivan, ETAI international liaison

James Taylor, BELTA co-founder & President, ETAS Journal contributing editor

Northern ETAI Event at Kfar Vradim

The first northern ETAI event of the year was held on November 4th at Amirim JH School in Kfar Vradim.

Fifty dedicated elementary, junior high and high school teachers from all sectors and from all over the northern region joined together after a day's work in order to ponder over relevant issues and share ideas. Some of the participants are ETAI members while others, some of whom were new to ETAI, are not. So the event opened with a short introduction to ETAI by Jennifer Spigelman, explaining who we are and what we do. Even for those long-time ETAI veterans amongst us, hearing Jennifer's words brought an immense sense of professional pride.

The sessions related to topics of direct relevance to our work as teachers in the state system. The plenary lecture, given by Dr. Fran Sokel entitled 'So..what does 'meaningful learning' mean?' offered focused insights into the concept of meaningful learning as well as practical suggestions as to what we might do (more of) in our classrooms that would contribute to this end. The plenary session was followed by two parallel sessions that were of interest to teachers of all grade levels. Jackie Teplitz shared her technological wisdom of Web 2 tools and how to use them wisely and effectively in our lessons. Participants used their own mobile devices in real time to participate in activities during the workshop. Francine Widerker shared her creative skills by engaging participants in origami and demonstrating how we can use it in our classrooms to provide opportunities for our pupils to develop thinking skills.

We would like to thank Amirim JH School for hosting us and all those who contributed to the success of the event in many other ways. The effort involved in putting together and attending such an event should not be underestimated, but the rewards are great when you have the opportunity to spend a couple of hours with professionals who share the same passions and generate positive energy. We look forward to more such events.

The Northern ETAI team