

WINTER AND SPRING – CONFERENCES TO COUNT ON!

Despite the shorter than usual school vacations at Hanukkah and Pesach time, quite a number of participants attended both the Winter and Spring ETAI Conferences which took place in Beer Sheva and Holon respectively.

ETAI welcomed in the winter season on December 21st with the conference “Southern Lights – Making your EFL Teaching Light and Bright” at Makif Amit. Plenary talks by Chief Inspector Dr. Judy Steiner, who spoke about reforms and teachers, and by Judie Segal, who spoke about making movies in the junior high school, were followed by a wealth of interesting and inspiring parallel sessions and workshops. The day ended on a light note with four presenters giving five to eight minute talks focusing on bright ideas to lighten up lessons.

Spring was in full bloom at the time of the conference which took place at Talpiot College on March 30th. Participants were treated to fascinating and enlightening plenary talks, which framed two sessions of parallel presentations. The day began with Dr. Judy Steiner’s thought provoking talk called “Meaningful Assessment.” Then, following a varied selection of presentations which all focused on creative ways to assess students’ language learning, conference attendees spilt up into two groups for parallel keynote talks. Dr. Miri Levin-Rozalis of Ben-Gurion University spoke about assessment and program evaluation in a talk entitled *Between measurement and evaluation – what is the teacher’s part of the puzzle?* Dr. Tziona Levy, Head of English Studies at ORT, demonstrated how effective use of the ASK kit contributes to students’ speaking ability and is truly assessment for learning. The second round of parallel sessions was followed by the final fascinating plenary talk entitled *DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT: New kid on the block?* by Dr. Erica Garb, Former Director of English Studies at the Association for the Advancement of Education.

Attendees at both conferences enjoyed full days of stimulating content, and went away armed with new knowledge and refreshing ideas to try in their classrooms. Thank you to all the presenters and speakers who volunteer their time and contribute to the professionalism of conference participants.

THE NES ZIONA MINI-CONFERENCE

Our regional conference on February 11 was hosted by the Ben Yehuda School in Nes Ziona. Despite strong winds and the threatening storm, 180 teachers came for an afternoon of professional development.

The conference opened with an update of what is going on in the area given by our wonderful Inspector, Dr Miriam Kluska. One of the projects is a reading fair to be held soon, organised by Amanda Caplan. This is an extensive reading project where the pupils from the junior high schools in Nes Ziona will share their reading projects at an evening gathering. As a taster of what will take place there, six pupils from the schools presented their reading projects. The audience listened, and were impressed by their projects, and their ability to stand up in front of so many English teachers and speak in English!

Our next treat was meeting Shaula Frankel who was presented with an engraved plaque from the Ministry of Education thanking her for her lifelong commitment to teaching English. Shaula shared some of her early teaching experiences with us, and explained how she found the way to her pupils’ hearts. She certainly found her way into ours; she’s a role model for us all!

Three parallel sessions followed. Ester Solomon from Rehovot showed elementary school teachers a plethora of sites to use in school and at home. Myada Abu-Chaled from Ramla explained the Career Start program being piloted in her school and others in the district – soon to be a part of other junior high schools in Israel. Aharona Gvaryahu answered those questions that all high school teachers are facing with their LD pupils and the paperwork for the Bagrut.

Thank you to all those who made the conference so successful.