

New Zealand Board of Geography Teachers

(N.Z. GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY INC.)

“The Network”

The NZBoGT Newsletter for Geography teachers

April 1999

Term Two

Issue No. 4

Chairperson's Report:

The NZBoGT held its Annual Meeting in Wellington on 12-13 March and this was an extremely productive and valuable session. This was my first meeting as the newly elected chairperson. Two of the main issues that arose from this meeting was the discussions on the perennial problem of the low number of high examination grades for geography students, and the Ministry of Education's new qualification programme *Achievement 2001*. Both of these issues are dealt with in more detail later in this newsletter.

The NZBoGT will be involved in many exciting activities over the course of this year. I sincerely believe that this national subject association does a wonderful job for all its members. What other association offers so many services and is so actively involved in the educational changes that we face.

I believe the most important role of the NZBoGT is to act as a national lobbying body on behalf of its members. It is the job of the NZBoGT to ensure that geography as a subject remains strong and successful – and this will often require 'political' action. The Position Paper is one example of this. The NZBoGT will be looking to take the leadership and initiative on directing the future of its subject.

Beyond this the NZBoGT offers a wide range of services to its members to help support the classroom teacher (e.g. the publication of Journals). There are also activities set up to promote geography as a subject. These include the Olympiad Competition, the well established Year 13 Planning and Decision Making Inquiry Projects, and "Geography Awareness Week".

This newsletter provides the vital link between the NZBoGT

as the national subject association and all of its members. This newsletter aims to 'network' amongst its members to keep them informed about the national and regional issues that concern geography teachers and also provide information about the range of services already mentioned.

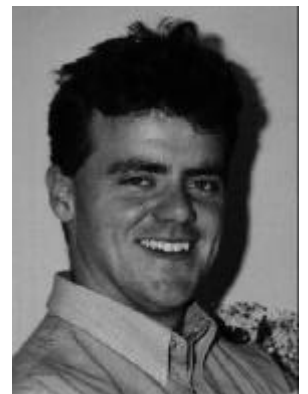
Geography teachers have a proud history of being at the leading edge of the educational developments and change. This includes the ABA work and recently the Unit Standards developments. The NZBoGT is committed to ensure that Geography remains in this leading role – not simply for the sake of change but to ensure that the changes being promoted are in the best interest for geography and our students.

There has been considerable educational change in the last decade and teachers are rather sick of all the uncertainty and unrest. We need clear direction, and the NZBoGT's Position Paper is one attempt to ensure that this is to happen. I would like to formally thank all of those who made the time to make valuable contributions. Finally all the very best for the rest of this term and the year ahead.

Mark Wilson

NZBoGT Chairperson
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HODs are encouraged to photocopy this A3 newsletter for ALL their staff, otherwise please at least pass on this copy to your school's geography staff to share the information:

HOD → → → → →

Regional Teacher Representatives

The six Regional Teacher Representatives on the NZBoGT are elected by their NZGS regional branch to present the views and issues of their regions geography teachers, and also to keep their local teacher groups informed about NZBoGT issues and events.



Auckland Regional Report:

The well-attended AGM of the Auckland Association (AGTA) in February has resulted in an enthusiastic committee chaired by Nick Osborne. An equipment courier service is now based at Marist College (contact: Faye Langdon). A GIS (Geographic Information Systems) course at the University of Auckland Geography Department gave participants guidance in using Exel for creating maps using imported data as well as relating GIS to focusing questions. Geography Dept GIS staff, postgraduate students and an Auckland Regional Council GIS expert shared their experience with participants (organisers: June, Nick). A Term 2 Urban Settlements course will incorporate some of those GIS ideas. The main focus this term, however, has been on the NZBoGT's Position Paper on Achievement 2001. A recent AGTA panel discussion (Graeme Aitken, John Allpress, and Cornell Von Kralingen) chaired by Robyn Irvine identified a variety of concerns submitted on to this Paper and provided the basis for ongoing discussion.

June Logie (Auckland Representative)

Auckland Girls' Grammar, Fax: 09-3099152

Waikato Regional Report:

The Geography year has got off to a good start in the Waikato, with lots of things happening. Ann Weir (the new chair of the Waikato Geography Teachers' Association) spent some time in the USA training as a trainer for the GLOBE Project. This is a tool for using GIS in the classroom, and we will certainly be hearing more about it. You can find out more about the programme on [http://www.waikato.ac.nz/geog/geog ed/index.html](http://www.waikato.ac.nz/geog/geog%20ed/index.html) and link to GLOBE. Assoc. Prof. Lex Chalmers ran a very valuable course in the April 'holidays' for teachers on using GIS in the classroom. Several Waikato schools participated in their own rounds for the Geography Olympiad. Six schools sent representatives to the regional final, which was a fun night the students thoroughly enjoyed. Lex was also the 'MC' for that event, so thank you for your input to secondary Geography Lex. The NZBoGT's Position Paper has dominated much of the time and efforts in the first term – this is viewed as an important step forward that will place us in a better position when the achievement standards are developed. Thanks to the writers involved in this - they have put in a lot of time and effort getting together the ideas of geographers across NZ.

Brian Kendrick (Waikato Representative)

Sacred Heart College, Fax: 07-8562316



Manawatu Regional Report:

I hope that your Geography teaching year has started well. Most Geography Teacher Associations in this region have had their AGMs and have planned a full and interesting programme for the year. Copies of the NZBoGT's draft "Position Paper" on directions for NZ geography and assessment have been circulated and feedback sought. The Manawatu Branch of the NZ Geographical Society is in the final stages of preparation for the NZGS Geography conference – *Geography and the Millennium* (5-8 July 1999). I hope that many teachers in the region can attend. The Manawatu Geography Teacher's association is once again organising the Year 11 Central Districts Geography Award. Details will be posted in the Education Gazette.

Suzanne Downs (Manawatu Representative)

Napier Girls' High School, Fax: 06-8358164



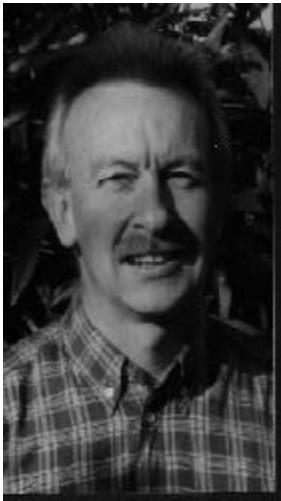
Wellington Regional Report:

A well attended AGM of the Wellington Teachers Ass (WELLGEOG) held at NIWA meant a good start to this year. This meeting included a short presentation on current research at NIWA. Earlier on the same day Prof. John Gamble of Victoria presented the annual lecture for Year 13 students preparing for their Tongariro Fieldtrips. An evening meeting for teachers at which Dr. Graeme Campbell (NZGS Pres.) gave a presentation on the Ruapehu Crater Issue – ideal for classroom application. Two inservice days are being offered this term: the first is on GIS and other statistical resources, and second is an update of current information on Asia (focus upon Monsoon Asia topic). Early June will be the closing time for the new Year 12 "Photo Essay" Competition (sponsored by Coach Tours of Australia). If successful this competition will be offered nationally in 2000. More information will be at this year's Conference.

Annette Lanigan (Wellington Representative)

Mana College, Fax: 04-2375775





Canterbury Regional Report:

The 1999 AGM of the Christchurch Association held at the Christchurch College of Education were well attended. This was possibly due to the timing (at 5 pm rather than in the evening) and the fact that Geography teachers in the region had a number of concerns. The issue of the low proportion of students gaining high marks in the examinations was discussed at length. The concerns about the impact on our subject were passed on to the NZBoGT. Feedback was also provided for the group writing the Position Paper for the Ministry's Geography Expert Panel. Following the AGM the Committee has met and started to plan activities for the 1999 year. These will include a Geography Teachers' Day to be hosted by the University of Canterbury during term 2, and a HOD Day in term 4. We also hope to sponsor a meeting for Geography teachers in South Canterbury later in the year. The Update newsletter will be produced and consideration will be given to supporting a new edition of the Christchurch Urban Kit. Our University staff representative has requested feedback on proposed first year course changes. The close relationship between secondary teachers and members of the Geography Department at Canterbury University is particularly valued.

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Rangiora High School, Fax: 03-3138005

Otago Regional Report:

Under the chairmanship of Lindy Graham (Kavanagh College), Otago Geography Teachers Assn (OGTA), have outlined their plans for 1999. An in-service day is planned with the focus on Technology in Geography Teaching. During Geography Awareness Week there will be a Year 11 Quiz, which is hoped to attract entries from all around our region. A new initiative for Otago is a planned Year 13 Student Day with the focus on preparation for Bursary through a variety of workshops. It is hoped that this will be held in conjunction with the University of Otago. Contributions have also been received from teachers regarding the Position paper and teachers value these opportunities for curriculum input.

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The "Position Paper" – the NZBoGT signals the direction for the future of geography

By Mark Wilson, Chairperson NZBoGT

The Government announced back in November 1998 the new *Achievement 2001* policy. This will hopefully end the prolonged period of trials and uncertainty, and divisive arguments over assessments and qualifications in secondary schools. Teachers (and students) are ready for some real and concrete answers.

The NZBoGT decided not to wait, but to show leadership and clear direction for where geography should be seeking to head into the new millenium. The result of this initiative has been the development of the "Position Paper".

The aim of this Paper was not to write the achievement standards, this was because of the short time frame and also it is accepted that there will be a generic model. However the NZBoGT did want to provide clear and specific recommendations on how the geography standards are to be developed by the Ministry's "Expert Panel".

Despite a very short time frame wide consultation was achieved, and two very productive writing meetings involving experienced geographers from across NZ produced this Position Paper. I would like to thank all those who gave their time and skills in this effort.

One of the main issues that came from the considerable

work and time put into this Paper was the need for a review of our current Syllabus document. Many strengths of the Syllabus were identified – for example it is flexible enough to enable teachers to branch out into new and exciting studies of geography, while still provide a basic structure. The updating needed is to 'fit' this document into the NZ Curriculum Framework, to provide clear definitions of key ideas, to reconsider the focusing questions, and also to incorporate the considerable changes that have occurred in geography thinking and approaches since this Syllabus was first developed (1970s-1980s). The Ministry of Education has stated that no Syllabus review will occur (see Network issue No.1, November 1998), especially now with the attention and funding focused on *Achievement 2001*. Pressure will need to continue if this is to be achieved, otherwise the new achievement standards could well become our defacto Syllabus.

Copies of the NZBoGT's Position Paper will be circulated to the major regional Geography Teacher Associations for endorsement. Individual copies for schools will be made available through the GRC for a small cost – details will be advertised shortly.

What is happening to the exam results of our able geographers ?

This seems to be becoming an increasing perennial complaint by geography teachers from across the country after the external exam results are released. Why can't their best geography students seem to get the high grades – in fact why can't any of the top geographers seem to get high grades ?

It is not that there is any strong complaint about the exams themselves. The NZBoGT's own annual exam survey reveals positive comments and attitudes to the exams after they are released – that is until the results come in.

Teachers do seem happy with the examination papers set, but the serious concerns are raised when the distribution of marks awarded is revealed. An analysis of the available statistics for SC for example shows that the proportion of candidates at the 75th percentile or higher levels is considerably lower than it is for English, Maths and Science. There is also the general feeling that the most able geography students also do not score highly in relation to other subjects in University Bursary.

Roger Baldwin (as the Canterbury representative) provided examples of able students from different schools for whom geography was their lowest mark. Case studies were provided to illustrate the impact of this issue where Career and/or Deans have advised students not to choose geography if they want to get high grades. This is therefore not only unfair to the students of geography but having a serious impact upon the subject.

This issue was debated at the recent NZBoGT Annual Meeting, and various solutions were set out. These included:

- reconsideration of bonus or compensatory marks to produce a better distribution of marks (esp. for paragraphs)
- Allowing greater tolerance in skill work where inappropriate precision is demanded.

- The examiners should consider the standard deviation of marks as well as the mean in marking “the first 30 scripts”. This would enable modification of marking schedules at an early stage.
- NZQA does a means analysis to justify the low band required for geography exam means.

These were included in a full letter addressed to NZQA, the Ministry of Education, and the current chief examiners.

Tony Davidson of NZQA replied (dated 19 April) to the NZBoGT's letter stating that... *“As you are aware School Certificate marks are not scaled. Any characteristics of the distribution of final marks is therefore determined by the manner in which the examination paper and marking schedule are set and the examination is marked.*

University Bursaries total marks are subject to subject scaling. Since marks for University Bursaries subjects are added, there needs to be a mechanism to establish comparability between subjects. The process used is a percentile analysis based on the 5th, 10th, 25th, 50th, 75th, and 90th percentiles. Hence, the final marks for each subject are determined by the ability level of the candidates taking that subject as measured by their performances in all other subjects.”

NZQA's QA Operations notice (19 March 1999) has announced some changes in the allocation of marks for paragraphs in SC.

The point was also made at the NZBoGT meeting that teachers also need to ensure that they carefully read the annual chief examiners reports. These can often repeat the same areas where teaching needs to be addressed and weaknesses occur.

Teachers will need to continue to monitor this issue and consider further solutions that could be passed on through the NZBoGT to ensure our able students are fairly recognised in their achievement.

The New Zealand Geographical Society (NZGS):

To contact your **regional branch secretary** to find out more about our parent organisation:

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WAIKATO BRANCH:	Lars Brabyn: C/- Dept. of Geo., University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton.
MANAWATU BRANCH:	M.McKenna: C/- Geo. Programme, School of Global Studies, Massey University, Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North.
WELLINGTON BRANCH:	Linda Singh: 74 Old Porirua Road, Ngaio, Wellington.
CANTERBURY BRANCH:	Anna Taylor: C/- Dept. of Geo., Canterbury University, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch.
OTAGO BRANCH:	Peter Holland: C/- Dept. of Geo., Otago University, PO Box 56, Dunedin.

The Society has a homepage on the web at <http://www.waikato.ac.nz/geog/nzgs/nzgs.htm>