

Personalised Education Now

(Trading name for the Centre for Personalised Education. Charity number 1057442)

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Newsletter - January 2005

Dear Member

New Year Greetings and Good Wishes for 2005

Since the launch of PEN we certainly can't be said to be sitting on our laurels ... agendas and activity have been moving on at pace.

The October conference on the *Assessment of Personalised Learning* at Toddington proved to be very successful - we had an excellent, productive weekend. Carl Wilson and Linda Fryer from the Stables Project in York were very impressive in the ways they stimulated discussion which was lively and enthusiastic for the two days! Carl is writing a paper on the *Assessment of Personalised Learning* which should be valuable in helping us to take ideas forward. Although the Toddington conference was residential, it also proved that it was possible for people to attend on a daily basis, as two members found. There was wholehearted support for another conference there this year, although this will need to be discussed at the next Learning Exchange in April.

The work of the Trustees has moved up another gear with an annual working weekend, funded by a grant, added to our regular meetings. This has enabled significant work to be done and help develop working relationships. We have been delighted to engage the expertise of Hazel and Alan Crawley to the Trustees. They both bring a wide variety of skills and experiences to PEN having home educated their own family and been instrumental in developing Green Party perspectives on education.

Our first journal has been positively received and gives us a sound platform on which to build over future issues. Thank you to all those who have so kindly provided feedback. It's always a little nerve racking when a new team takes over from such a successful predecessor! We were delighted to have key national and international figures join our membership on receipt of our first journal. Although our membership is small, its quality is impressive.

We are working hard at developing our concept of a *Personalised Educational Landscape* which goes way beyond the current school dominated system. We know that the advantages to the learner, families and community of developing principled diversity of provision are great. We know we must encourage learning founded upon what we know about the brain, human development and the real needs of society for sustainability. There are continuing signs that the schooling system is trying to grapple with some issues - inflexible institutions, personalisation, learning to learn, assessment dominated curricula and learner voice. Deep down it knows schools cannot remain as they are and that they cannot remain the only feature in the learning landscape. Roland Meighan has recently been developing the idea of *Learning Episodes and Journeys* which takes a far more personalised approach to education. We are also looking at the idea of *Alternative Practitioners*. As a group we are delighted to champion the choices and successes of those who adopt pathways beyond the current *one size fits all*. But we are also very clear that choice is not enough, there have to be underpinning values and principles. It is these that will eventually guide the wholesale transformation of the schooling system into **non-ageist, flexible and personalised community-based learning centres**, and develop a broader personalised educational landscape of experiences that serves life-long learning, strengthens the family and the community.

The message is being spread far and wide as our profile is being established. Recent activity has included:

- Scotland at the Schoolhouse Conference in Perth – *Making the Guidance Work* (November 2004 – Peter Humphreys). There is an emerging engagement and understanding between the schooling system and home based educators stimulated by the Guidance and Policy demands instituted in Scotland.
- Cambridge Home Educating Families Resources Fair (November 2004 – Janet and Roland Meighan with bookstall)
- The Potential Trust and Questors ... *The Common Thread Conference* (November 2004 – Peter) We were invited by the Potential Trust, who have kindly funded us on many projects, to work with other national organisations at looking where we can assist each other and come together to access further funding. This work is positive and ongoing.
- DEMOS, Becta, Nesta Futurelab *Student Voice, Technology and Personalisation* (December 2004 – Peter Humphreys) We had one of two keynote presentations at the first of three seminars (December – February) with key national figures.
- BECTA – National ‘Ask the The Expert’ Hotseat on *Personalised Learning* (Peter was on the ICT ‘hotseat’ fielding questions on personalised learning throughout the month of November 2005)
- *Educational Heretics Press* ... new edition of *Finding Voices, Making Choices... Creativity for Social Change*. Edited by Mark Webster and Glen Buglass.
- Book Launch for *Finding Voices Making Choices* at the New Art Gallery, Walsall, in conjunction with Walsall Community Arts Team and Walsall Metropolitan Council (February 2005). If you would like to attend contact Janet.
- *Home Based Education Research Project*. The study is producing powerful insights and has been bolstered by our £10,000 grant from the Esmée Fairburn Foundation. Mike Fortune-Wood is already working on the first in a line of publications based on this work. This will be published in Spring 2005 by *Educational Heretics Press*.

When you add to this list the very successful and productive national conference at Toddington on *Assessment of Personalised Learning*, we can report on a very successful Autumn and Winter period. We can also look forward to continuing activity over the coming months. Our attention will turn to the next Learning Exchange in April 2005, development of much enhanced websites to extend our message and provide archive and access to a wide range of materials, news and eventually, communication and interaction. It is important that we get your news. We know there is so much going on within the membership, so please channel it through to us.

**The Next Learning Exchange – Sunday 17th April 2005
at Burleigh Community College, Loughborough.**

Some members, unable to attend the Toddington conference, missed the pattern of two Learning Exchanges per year at Loughborough. We, therefore, hope that this date in April will work for them and, of course, other members. The themes for this Exchange emerged from ideas expressed last April and at Toddington in October:

- Developments so far, and ideas for future developments of *Personalised Education Now*
- *A Personalised Learning Practitioner Development Scheme* (Roland has prepared a brief paper to stimulate discussion)

See enclosed paper for more detail on the Learning Exchange.

Within the mainstream educational world this quite a benchmark period - change of Minister of Education, impending election and the need for parties to generate their vision for education over the short and longer terms. There are indications that the key players are trying to develop a 5 year strategy within a broader 15 year vision and personalised education is becoming a central consideration.

All good wishes

Janet and Peter