

ACSNZ PRIZEGIVING 2012

It is a real privilege to welcome prize winners in the 2011 CIE examinations to Auckland Grammar School for this annual event. It is also especially pleasing to see so many parents and friends of the successful students here in support.

Welcome to schools who have travelled – Columba College (Dunedin), Hamilton Boys', Springbank School (KeriKeri), St Paul's Collegiate (Hamilton) and Whangarei Boys', and a very special welcome to schools winning awards for the first time – Avondale College, ACG Sunderland, St Paul's Collegiate and Whangarei Boys.

A particularly warm welcome to Dr Nigel Evans from the Woolf Fisher Trust who very generously support our organisation and Ms Dawn Jones our very first Administrator of ACSNZ and former Principal of ACG Senior College and Diocesan.

It is also a privilege to have the CEO of CIE, Ann Puntis, as our special guest this evening.

Ann Puntis has extensive experience in education and assessment. She obtained a BSc (Econ) with First Class Honours at Cardiff University and proceeded to research at the University of Oxford. She also obtained a Post Graduate Certificate in Education at the University of Cambridge.

Ann has worked as a teacher in secondary education, as a Centre Principal and as a policy maker in national education.

In 1997 Ann joined the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate and has worked in a number of areas developing the assessments and services provided by University of Cambridge International Examinations. She obtained her MBA in 2000.

Ann was appointed Chief Executive of University of Cambridge International Examinations in November 2005. Since that date I have got to know Ann well and admire her energy and vision for CIE. Since taking over as CEO there have been many innovations and improvements in the way CIE operates, and that is all down to Ann.

Tonight is particularly significant for me personally as it is my final CIE Awards evening as I will be finishing at Auckland Grammar School in September and moving on to new and different challenges.

In my nearly 20 years as Headmaster of Auckland Grammar School, introducing CIE exams to New Zealand has been one of the genuine highlights.

Speaking on behalf of Auckland Grammar School, I can say that CIE has been the key to our School retaining and enhancing its academic focus and niche; it has enabled us to maintain academic rigour and standards and allowed us to benchmark our students against the rest of the world.

Clearly many schools see these same advantages with over 50 schools involved in entering students in CIE exams. Last year there were over 30,000 entries in the CIE examination suite, and new schools are registering every year.

For example, over the past 12 months new registrations include Burnside High School (Chch), Hamilton Christian School, Nelson College, Cashmere High School (Chch), Southland Girls' High School, Taradale High School and Rangiora New Life School.

It has not been an easy road to reach the point where we are today. Issues we have had to overcome along the way include:

- threats by Ministry of Education to withdraw our funding
- threats to force us to teach NCEA when the legislation clearly allows schools to choose syllabi and qualifications beyond Year 10.
- refusal to recognise the qualification for University Entrance
- negative ill-informed publicity about CIE
- PPTA orchestrated campaign to undermine CIE
- Various MPs from Left leaning political parties writing slanderous comments about CIE and its staff which required the intervention of the Vice Chancellor of Cambridge University
- and much more.....

All of these issues have been overcome to such a degree that CIE is now a recognised part of the New Zealand education landscape and even part of Ministry of Education 'edu speak'.

Throughout these 11 years I would like to thank in particular Dawn Jones (ex ACG Senior College) for her support from the very beginning and to Mark Vella, Deputy Headmaster of Auckland Grammar School who did a lot of the initial research and has continued to be a staunch support for me.

Having Macleans College, ACG Schools and King's College join Auckland Grammar School setting up ACSNZ was the catalyst needed for the programme to grow and enabled us to offer services to schools interested in being involved in CIE, and certainly strengthened my resolve to make CIE work in New Zealand.

I am sure that all the schools represented here this evening would agree that by offering CIE to our students we are able to continue to offer a superb, challenging academic education that seeks to develop young men and women who know how to use their minds, are able to express themselves clearly and are able to think for themselves.

In my mind the choice of qualification comes down to your philosophy of what secondary education is for. Is it about credentialism and just getting enough credits to get a leaving certificate? This belief, as evidenced in NCEA, has led to subjects being divided into disparate, digestible chunks, checklists have proliferated and knowledge has become atomised, schools and students are incentivised to drop 'hard' subjects in favour of those where passes are easier; all tragic steps in the retreat from academia.

Or is secondary education about creating an educated citizenry by providing a rounded, substantive education based on subject knowledge which will enable our students to engage purposefully, meaningfully and intelligently with the world? All of which is underpinned by an assessment system that is fair, consistent, reliable, transparent, accurate, appropriate and internationally recognised (CIE).

To me personally, there is no choice; CIE has been so successful for us that I can't imagine Auckland Grammar School ever operating without it.

And as CIE has become part of the New Zealand educational scene, ACSNZ has been able to develop its own identity in so many ways, and offer a more varied service to New Zealand schools.

For example, a growing number of primary schools are now offering the CIE Primary Programme. Recent registrations include Waihi Preparatory School and Ficino School (Mt Eden) as well as King's Prep. Feedback on this programme is very positive.

Our association (ACSNZ) has also had to implement a process to manage the huge increase in the number of private candidates wanting to sit Cambridge exams. This includes home educated and gifted students as well as students from NCEA schools who want to study in their own time to gain an internationally recognised qualification.

Our innovative administrator, Janine Manning, has also introduced two new initiatives over the past few months:

1. Janine organised a revision programme in the third term holidays that was attended by over 500 Auckland students. The subjects offered for this revision programme will be extended even more this year in Auckland. The Association is also looking at offering this programme in other areas of New Zealand in a smaller range of subjects.
2. Recently Janine set up on-going IGCSE and AS Maths revision classes that will operate throughout the year and these were fully subscribed well in advance of commencement.

CIE, I believe, is successful in New Zealand because of the commitment, belief and energy of so many people, hence my great thanks to the Board and Academic Committee of ACSNZ for their support, wisdom and hard work since the inception of ACSNZ in 2003. Simon Peek from Macleans is the sole surviving member of the original Board that used to meet in the old ACG headquarters and I would like to especially thank Simon for his insight, unwavering belief in CIE and general support.

To Simon Higgins, the CIE Representative in New Zealand, who works very closely with our organisation, we do appreciate your input into the operation of CIE in New Zealand as well as your promotional work around the country - thanks Simon.

To the teachers who inspire their students to excel and aim to be the best they can be, my thanks. It is the great teachers in front of classes who make a school successful and enable the students to be fulfilled and enthusiastic scholars, and so many teachers have found teaching

CIE syllabi to be rewarding and inspirational and has enabled them to retain the love of their subject and their passion for teaching.

Our Administrator, Janine Manning, continues to make a great contribution. Janine is more than just an administrator; she is a devotee of CIE and a great advocate for the Cambridge examinations.

She makes the job seem so simple and rarely do I have to get involved in the day to day running of ACSNZ at all, so capable is Janine. I really appreciate her genuine interest in CIE, her hard work and her many initiatives.

A special thanks to Ann Puntis. We are really appreciative of your interest in how CIE operates in New Zealand and enjoyed your message to the scholars. We wish you an enjoyable holiday across the ditch and safe return home to the cold of UK.

This evening we will present 30 Top in the World and 45 Top in New Zealand, 19 High Achievers and awards recognising overall excellence in a student's course of study.

Tonight's occasion then is indeed a celebration of intellect, hard work and academic excellence and a recognition that it is alright to succeed in the classroom, and it is great to aim high and be the best you can be.

Congratulations to all our scholars; keep striving and best wishes for the future. I am sure that CIE is here to stay in New Zealand and will continue to prosper.