

## Chair's introduction

Welcome to our second newsletter. Our work together with schools is ongoing thanks to the huge commitment of Headteachers and senior leaders in Hackney. Our aim is to support the continuing development of a learning culture and you will see this in the work of the three panels; Reading for All, Leading the Curriculum and Belonging For All.

Seminars for Headteachers are planned three times a year, the first of which is on **Thursday, 13th May, 16.30-18.00 - PLEASE SAVE THE DATE.** The seminar will feature colleagues talking about some of the work we have done together and what they have learned from it so far. There will be articles to read prior to the seminar, and we have invited poet and thinker Anthony Anaxagorou to talk with you, and share some of his poetry and thoughts about colonialism and belonging.

There will be opportunities for you to network at the seminar and tell us what you think about the way you would like us to continue to develop a learning culture in Hackney.

**Eleanor Schooling, CBE**  
**Chair of HSGB**

**HSGB FORWARD PLAN FOR 2020-21:** Headteachers, Principals and Heads of settings are welcome to attend the forthcoming HSG Board and panel meetings taking place on the following dates (Contact Silvi Shrestha, [silvi.shrestha@hackney.gov.uk](mailto:silvi.shrestha@hackney.gov.uk));

- Board - 29 April 2021, 16.30-17.00
- Curriculum Panel - 11 May 2021, 14.00-14.45
- Belonging Panel - 10 June 2021, 16.00-17.30

## Reading For All

We want to acknowledge and celebrate Hackney schools on the myriad of ways they kept children reading this term. We know schools went above and beyond to ensure children had access to both physical and digital reading materials and less experienced readers and disadvantaged children were offered a variety of support.

Exposure to rich language continued through staff delivering live or recorded story sessions and reading lessons and for many children this was the highlight of their day - a great example of reading supporting good mental health and a sense of belonging.

Although of course schools now face many challenges with all children returning to school, reading leads are keen to build on some of the more positive aspects from this term:

**Strong parental engagement** - Building on parents' desire to understand more about how they could help their child and parents learning from teachers modelling the importance of discussion and understanding.

**Independence** - Some children became more independent in their reading choices without access to usual resources and developed their

'reading identity.' Schools are taking the opportunity to find out what children have been reading and build on this to develop 'booktalk.'

**Digital texts / Virtual author visits** - Children may have used kindles, e-books etc. for the first time and schools may continue to give children access to these. Children were able to register and use the Hackney library services virtually and this helped those children with few books at home immensely. Virtual author visits took place in a number of Hackney schools helping to inspire a love of reading and may be a more accessible and economic way forward for schools wanting regular author visits.

The Reading for All Panel has coordinated some learning between a group of primary schools with a focus on adventurous vocabulary and discussion in a learning community.

**Kathleen O'Connor, Associate Deputy Headteacher**  
**Reading for All Panel, Advisor**

## Talking with parents about race

Talking with parents about race continues with groups of schools, while those who took part in the earlier sessions have followed up the work. For me the most significant message was that parents and staff can talk about race, and they can then take

action. Conversations were very positive and empowering and sometimes painful or uncomfortable truths were the agents of change. Often the fact that parents were able to talk to schools from the comfort of their own homes meant they felt it was an easier conversation.

It was important that parents saw that these discussions were part of wider action and work led by Hackney Education. They hoped that many of the matters raised were being tackled for all schools, for example the work that has been done on the curriculum. In other schools the work complemented other work they had been doing over the year and the second round of discussions with parents has been more integrated, and less of a launching point.

The long period of lockdown has changed the way schools interact with parents and these sessions deepened the personal relationship with parents and kept it linked to a wider strategic approach.

There are already many examples of changes that schools made following these sessions, some making radical changes to uniform policies and for example relaxations about rules on hair and headscarves. Some schools have established a forum for parents to continue these discussions, while others are working on how to make their PTAs more open and inclusive.

No single activity can make significant change and all schools took on the work that needed to be done on the curriculum, using every opportunity for discussion, assemblies, online

carnivals, and themes such as countries that make us. Many schools have audited their resources, especially books, to ensure that high quality books with adventurous vocabulary reflect many backgrounds.

Some schools set up staff book-clubs that complement and support the longer term thinking and awareness that teachers will continue to need.

For schools thinking about setting this up themselves, there were important elements that made the sessions work well. One was the outside involvement, that allowed for more challenge and open discussion. Then there were the very strong open questions that were asked that led to genuine debate.

The programme has restarted with six more primary schools, and work is planned to use a similar model with a group of governing bodies.

**Eleanor Schooling, CBE**  
**Chair of HSGB**

### **Towards a whole school curriculum**

Primary and secondary curriculum leaders have come together in the Spring term to progress the conversation on what a whole school curriculum could look like across Hackney Borough. Eight primary curriculum leaders and five secondary curriculum leaders kindly answered the call for volunteers from HSGB.

Both groups are engaged in facilitated

conversations to surface key topics, issues and ambitions in developing a curriculum that is representative and inspiring for all of Hackney's children, young people and schools. The groups are led by Dr. Tracey Allen, Associate Professor at UCL's Centre for Educational Leadership and member of HSGB.

Primary and secondary groups have met in the Spring term to begin to identify grounding themes. Three key challenge questions are also being scoped to evoke an enquiring attitude to curriculum, questions which push us all to continue to address the effectiveness, outcomes and quality of curriculum over time. Of particular interest, is how best to engage and include core constituencies such as senior leaders and in particular, children and young people, in shaping, refining and reviewing curriculum developments.

Towards the end of the summer, the work from both groups will be compiled into a short document which will be available to all Hackney schools to develop and broaden out of this important conversation. The document will outline initial thoughts on grounding principles for an ambitious and hopeful curriculum and will include challenge questions to support current and future curriculum developments.

**Dr. Tracey Allen, Associate Professor, UCL**  
**HSGB Member**