**Follow-up Survey of Writing & Technology in England. Summer 2011**

**Question I: International What cultural differences did you learn during the two weeks abroad and in what context did you learn these differences?**

As a New Zealander abroad I learned not to assume anything because often I would interpret gesture or comment by someone in my kiwi style only to find that it was not quite the intended understanding. Colloquialisms differ within cultures and from one culture to another. I have learned also innuendo and nuances, like colloquialisms can also be different within and between cultures. Perhaps one of my biggest learning curves was that I have a culture that I need to be aware of and how this may be interpreted by others.

In the Surrey classroom I became aware that when learning, I learn better by doing it rather than reading about it or, I like the ‘proof’ of it in the practical sense. I found people were always polite, respectful and courteous, and if you exhibited the same values and attitudes toward them any small misunderstandings were very easily overcome with discussion and sometimes a good laugh.

I am also aware that people are intrinsically all the same, it is our culture and beliefs that shape the way we view others and other things. One must always be careful of generalisations and preconceived ideas about someone or something based upon some else’s experience. Perhaps be aware, but do not be influenced by others wait to experience something for yourself and make your own judgements. An old proverbial saying that I often adhere to is; *you reap what you sow*.

**Question II: Writing In this course, the focus was Teacher as Writer, rather than the Teaching of Writing. To what extent did producing writing in three different modes (expressive, poetic, and expository) affect your confidence and competence as a writer? How will/could your experience as a writer influence you as a teacher?**

I have found just being able to write, write, write about exciting and wonderful experiences that I was having, made the writing easy. A little like having a discussion and because I can type quickly it was like having a conversation, except this time I have a wonderful record of my experiences. When I have been back and reread some of the writing I did, it has brought back some wonderful memories and triggered others. I think it gives you a richer sense of what you did experience because you have to think to write and then read to check and then write again. I now know why journaling is so valuable. My definition would be it is a historical record of events that can be returned to any time.

This experience will influence my teaching of writing by saying to the students ‘just write’ nothing else matters. Actually it will matter when someone else tries to read it, but that is when I know they will do all the editing because that is when they will care how someone else interprets what they have written. I have learned not to ‘worry’ about surface features, but to be more interested in the deeper features as the former will correct itself in time but the latter puts ‘pen on paper’.

**Question III: Technology We introduced you to many technology tools during the course. As a teacher, which will you most likely to implement in your teaching and why?**

I returned directly to the classroom on completion of this course because in New Zealand we are in the middle of our school year with every intention of introducing the different technology/writing tools to my ICT/Writing programme. This course opened up a world of new resources to me never having used any of the websites learned about on this course in my classroom before. I immediately introduced Google Maps, we looked at the layout of our school and what were the important features of it – taking pictures of the features and writing about why we felt this way. We did have a little problem with the age restriction on using the site, flickr. I have been put onto another photo publishing site, snapfish.

I then introduced Google docs. My intention was to encourage more writing from the students using another form of conferencing while I researched for my own teaching practice if this could be advantageous in regard to conferencing more students in less time effectively. I discovered that it does offer some of these advantages but like most things a balance of different forms of any one thing is possibly the best strategy. Presently I am about to introduce Blogging with an American teacher I met on the course. The students and I are looking forward to this.

Finally if the end of our school year does not arrive too quickly I would like to introduce the students to ‘Bitstripsforschools’. The reason for this is I have not used comic strip writing in my class this year and I believe there will be students who will enjoy creating stories in this way and I am sure it will be an enjoyable way to exit the writing programme for the year.

On the course I used ‘glogster’ which I think will be a great tool for students to publish topic studies in. So that is one I will investigate for the beginning of the next school year. What this course has done is given me the confidence and contacts to continue to grow my skills and knowledge around the use of technology tools in the classroom which has been invaluable.