

Budding authors show the write stuff

Interschool competitions are a lot of fun. Some rivalries are decades old and are taken very seriously. Others are new and fresh, and exist to promote the ever-developing scope of education, writes Waikanae School teacher **Jonathan Thompson**.

Waikanae School and Kapakapanui School have competed in a newly invented competition – a contest that was less a battle and more a showcase of an all-important pursuit: writing.

It was a delight to oversee the competition and to guide the Waikanae School student writers through a series of dedicated extension lessons, but a true pleasure to refine the parameters of the competition alongside Kapakapanui writing extension teacher Keryn Mells.

Together, we tweaked the parameters until the challenge was both fair and exciting.

In the end, two competition tiers were formed – the first, an over-500 word comp for a select few students who'd previously demonstrated an advanced writing ability; and an under-500 word comp open to all.

As it was the first time trailing the competition, both tiers were limited to Years 5/6 students.

For the over-500 word comp, students were required to set their story within the 'Waikanae' of their imagination, include two main characters and at least one secondary character, have a central problem, and to use correct punctuation and grammar.

Across both competition tiers, formatting was strict – students were limited to a small number of font choices, and spacing on the page was tightly defined. Stories were submitted anonymously and without men-



Competitors for both competitions from both schools.

Waikanae School pupil Rory Overton was the first place winner of the over-500 word competition.

tion of their school.

Local writer Eirlys Hunter, author of *The Mapmakers' Race*, and its sequel, *The Uprising: The Mapmakers in Cruxcia* – kindly donated her time to judge the over-500 word entries and was asked to select her top seven stories.

Waikanae School ultimately took out the competition with a score of 5 to 2, earning them the competition cup for their efforts.

Waikanae School student Rory



Madelaine Lyders' story had some lovely descriptive writing, a good story structure and shape, and a good opening and ending.

Judges Jacqui Simpson and Tracey Hall from Ōtaki's Books and Co

Overton won top story overall, with Hunter commending his piece *Dogfight* for its "adventurous similes and metaphors, and its tight, shapely story".

Other students who placed in the top seven included Waikanae School students Alyssa Beale, Esther Ross, Maite Brider, and Gemma Grainger, as well as Kapakapanui School students Camea Boeyen and Zachary Gibson. For the under-500 word comp, the best story came from Kapakapanui School student Madelaine Lyders.

According to judges Jacqui Simpson and Tracey Hall from Ōtaki's Books and Co, Lyders' story "had some lovely descriptive writing, a good story structure and shape, and a good opening and ending."

The runners up for the under-500 comp were Waikanae School students Alyssa Beale and Ocean Walker. Three further stories were highly commended, and came from Kapakapanui School student Elizabeth Gibbs, as well as Waikanae School students Maddy Johnson and Queenie Wilkinson.

To celebrate the competition's end, Kapakapanui student writers and staff were invited to this week's Year 5/6 assembly at Waikanae School.

Simpson from Books and Co made an appearance to hand out vouchers and books for several winners across both schools.

Student writers from both schools then came together for a shared morning tea, with writing itself celebrated as the true winner of the day.