

FEKÍ - AGM 2018

Annual Report

March 3rd, 2018

Welcome to the 2018 Annual General Meeting of the Association of English Teachers in Iceland (ATEI – FEKÍ in Icelandic).

The current board members are:

Lilja Margrét Möller – Treasurer

Íris Rut Agnarsdóttir – Secretary

Þórunn Patricia Sleight

Edda Lára Kaaber

Ghasoub Abed - alternate

Samúel Lefever – Chair

Þórunn Patricia Sleight is the FEKÍ representative on the STÍL board. Guðný Ester Aðalsteinsdóttir manages the FEKÍ website. Jennifer McNamara is FEKÍ's representative on the Málfríður Editorial Board. I would like to thank the 3 of them for taking on those responsibilities.

The current membership of Fekí is 152, a slight increase from last year. On the other hand, membership in our FB group is considerably larger, over 400 members and continues to grow. Membership is an ongoing issue of concern for the association – how do we get more teachers to join and take an active part in the workings of the association? The FB group, which is open to all, is good for informing teachers about the association and passing on information about events of interest to English teachers but since the group is free, we don't get any income from it, which is sorely needed. Our goal is to increase our paying membership in Fekí so that we can continue to provide teachers with an active forum for sharing knowledge, experiences and discussion between English teachers. This year we have advertised our events as open to all, but non Fekí members have been asked to pay a fee for

the event or join the association. This has given us some new members and a little bit of extra income. Later on, Lilja will go over our finances in more detail.

Here is an overview of this year's business since the last AGM was held on April 27th, 2017.

The board has met regularly during the year, and we have kept the number of meetings to 6, in line with trying to keep costs to a minimum. Considerable work is done through online communication between meetings.

We have continued with some of our regular annual events during the year and offered some additional ones. You could say that our main focus this year was on academic vocabulary. We began the fall term by co-sponsoring a workshop on academic vocabulary in cooperation with the Vidgís Finnbogadóttir Institute of Foreign Languages. The workshop was led by Averil Coxhead from Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand and was very well attended. This was followed up with a workshop in January led by the English teachers at MH. They shared their ideas and approaches to teaching academic vocabulary with a good group of teachers in attendance. And to continue with the theme, this morning's workshop on assessing academic vocabulary, which was led by John Baird from Queen's University in Belfast, added a further dimension to the topic. We would like to thank everyone who contributed to these events, either as leaders or participants. The workshops are good examples of how we can share and learn from each other and promote English teaching in the country.

On September 23rd, we held a 'coffee meeting' at Myllubakkaskóli in Reykjanesbæ. One of the English teachers there, Margrét Ósk Einarsdóttir, shared information about a variety of activities and projects she uses in her teaching, including web resources, outdoor education, and a writing marathon. The meeting was also used to discuss one of our annual events, the Short story competition, and decide upon this year's theme.

On October 12th we held a follow-up workshop from the spring on the use of apps and Ipads in English teaching. The workshop was held at Borgarholtsskóli and was

led by Rakel Magnúsdóttir, who showed us how to use a number of resources such as Padlet, Sway, Book Creator, and more in teaching.

As I mentioned before, one of our biggest events that we organize every year is a Short Story competition. It is launched every year on the European Day of Languages, Sept. 26th and the theme chosen for this year was Dreams. This year 14 grade schools and 4 upper-secondary schools sent in stories; 31 stories from the grade schools, and 10 stories from the upper-secondary schools. These figures, however, are only the tip of the iceberg. Each school is only allowed to send 3 stories which means that many schools have to choose between a large number of stories from their students. Many teachers have told us how they integrate the competition into their teaching, and how it encourages students to be creative and more diligent in writing in English.

After we have received the stories in December we (the board members) are faced with the challenge of selecting the winners in each age category, which is not an easy task! We took a long session in January to read the stories and come to an agreement on this year's winners. We will honor the winners at an awards ceremony at Bessastaðir on March 8th. We're very pleased and thankful that the First Lady of Iceland, Eliza Reid, has agreed to host the reception. It makes it such a special event for the students, their parents and teachers, and gives them well-deserved recognition.

I would like to thank the board and especially Lilja for her very efficient work in managing the competition. We have a few copies of the winning stories from last year for you to take a look at after the meeting, if you're interested.

Another annual event that Fekí members can participate in is the annual International conference of IATEFL, the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language. This year the conference will be held in Brighton, April 10-13, 2018. The conference includes over 500 talks, workshops, symposiums and evening events which are both informative and entertaining. It is a great place for learning about the newest materials and trends in English teaching. You can easily fill your suitcase with a wide selection of books, pamphlets and notes that you can pick up at the Publishers' Exhibition. Fekí is an associate organization of IATEFL and we

always send a representative to the Associates' Day which is held the day before the official conference begins. This gives us a chance to share experiences, concerns and ideas with representatives from other English teacher organizations from around the world, to the benefit of our own organization.

Several teachers have signed up for this year's conference so if you are interested in going, please let us know. We have set up a FB event that you can join or just send us an email.

One more annual event organized by the board was the summer course for English teachers. Last summer's course was held in cooperation with Endurmenntun HÍ with a grant from Samstarfsnefnd um Endurmenntun Framhaldsskólakennara. It was a 3-day course held in June and taught by Dr. Daniel Xerri from the University of Malta. The course, which focused on creative approaches to English Language Learning and Teaching, was attended by 25 lower and upper secondary English teachers and was very enlightening.

This year we have organized a summer course in Dublin, Ireland. The course will be held June 18-22, 2018 and is taught in cooperation with Alpha College of English. The course is called 'Bringing Literature to Life in the Classroom' and is aimed at lower and upper secondary English teachers. The course consists of morning input sessions which, among other things, introduce Irish literature and culture through practical activities followed by an extensive afternoon cultural program. All FEKÍ members are eligible for the course. The course is funded in part through a grant from Rannís/SEF (Samstarfsnefnd um endurmenntun framhaldsskólakennara) which covers the course fee for upper-secondary teachers, but not travel, accommodation or food expenses. Elementary teachers can apply for a grant to cover the course fee and travel costs through Kennarasamband Íslands (Vonarsjóður and Vísindasjóður, <http://www.ki.is/>). Registration is open until April 30th and you can get more information about the course on our website and our FB group. I am the contact person for the course so you can also turn to me for more information. Again, we encourage teachers to take part in summer courses like this as part of their professional development.

On a more somber note, I would like to note the passing of one of our honorary members, Heimir Áskelsson last October. Heimir was one of the founding members of FEKÍ and served as chairman of the association for many years. We extend him our thanks and gratitude for his service and commitment towards the advancement of English teaching in Iceland.

Now I'll briefly mention some upcoming events. First of all, there is the IATEFL conference in April, that I have already mentioned, and straight away next fall, you can expect to hear from us about next year's short story competition. We plan to send out information about the theme and procedures of the competition in advance of the European Day of Languages in September. Also, I draw attention to the fact that FEKÍ will celebrate its golden anniversary in 2019, so it is time to begin planning how we want to recognize and celebrate this milestone. I suggest that we form an Anniversary committee soon to start the planning. If anyone would like to volunteer, please contact me.

Finally, we are always open to suggestions for more events and other ways for the association to strengthen the teaching of English in Iceland and to provide English teachers with opportunities to share and learn from each other. As I said before, we are dedicated to reaching out to new members and finding ways to support them in their professional development. But we are faced with having to operate on a shoestring. Government funding in the form of a grant from the Ministry of Education has been cut and there seems to be little hope of getting that reinstated, so we have to make do with a budget that relies almost solely on membership fees. So please keep that in mind when it comes time to pay each spring! We need your support!

In closing, I would like to thank my fellow board members for their cooperation and hard work this year. You have helped make all the events and other business of the association run smoothly and efficiently this year and I look forward to continuing working with you.

Thank you.

Samúel Lefever
Fekí Chair