

Te Manu Hou

Quarterly Newsletter of New Zealand Kindergartens Inc
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Picking up the Pace

Effective literacy interventions for accelerated progress over the transition into decile 1 schools

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The Child Literacy Foundation and Woolf Fisher Research Centre*

This final report to the Ministry of Education on the Professional Development associated with the Early Childhood Primary Links via Literacy (ECPL) Project is available in full on the Ministry of Education's website – www.minedu.govt.nz

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This is a report about researching effective ways of supporting literacy development for children (up to 90% of whom are Maori and Pacific Islands children) in communities served by decile 1 schools in Otara and Mangere. New Zealand research indicates that children in these schools, compared with national patterns have low achievement in conventional school literacy on entry to school and this initial disparity in reading and writing continues throughout their schooling.

While aspects of mainstream programmes in general work well for most New Zealand children, current programmes do not address the need for early and accelerated learning to enable children in low decile schools to achieve within a range expected for their age. Achieving this was the general aim of the interventions reported here.

The research asked two questions. Firstly, what are the separate and combined effects on children's achievement of providing professional development to teachers in early childhood centres (N=37) and to teachers of children in their first year of schooling (N=73)? Secondly, through the provision of professional development for these teachers can an increased number of children in decile 1 schools achieve at levels expected for their age at school entry and after their first year at school at age six? The design followed and compared different groups of children (with and without the intervention) at six-monthly intervals from 4, 6 years to 6,0 years (a total of 415 children). Two interventions are reported and their focus was on learning, language and literacy over the six months before school in early childhood centres and during the first year at school.

The interventions were based on two general approaches. The early childhood intervention aimed to enhance children's literacy development by focusing on teaching in literacy and language activities in early childhood centres, thereby building continuity in literacy development across settings. The primary intervention was directed toward changing teacher's beliefs about language, learning and literacy and focussed on intensive teaching to help teachers and children manage the mismatches that occur during early literacy instruction.

continued overleaf ...

Congratulations:

A box of chocolates goes to the writer of the first article that is received and accepted for publication for each edition.

The winner this time is: Jenny Braaksma, Head Teacher, York Kindergarten, Masterton.

Please remember – we invite NZKI members of parent committees, teachers, Senior Teachers, Presidents and Managers to send articles to the national office of NZKI for possible inclusion in Te Manu Hou. The articles need to be supplied by email, in Word format, Arial font, and of approximately 500 words.

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Both interventions, which took the form of professional development for teachers, were underpinned by a co construction view of learning and literacy as social practices.

The early childhood intervention showed that by further focusing on literacy and language activities within the current practices in centres associated with decile 1 schools school-related literacy and language could be enhanced. Different types of centres (N= 15) were represented. As a result of the early childhood professional development children at 5,0 years showed statistically and educationally significant higher achievement on school-related literacy and expressive and receptive English language measures, compared with other children who had been in early childhood centres before the teachers had the professional development. On entry to school the children were close to expected levels in concepts about print and exceeded expected levels in a story retelling task. The results were replicated across three phases. The intervention was generally as effective for Maori as it was for Pacific Islands children. The data for children whose home language was not English and for those in the Pasifika Language Group centres raise issues about the need for research into and assessment of bilingual and biliteracy development.

The primary intervention with 73 teachers from 12 primary schools was also shown to be very effective in terms of children's accelerated progress. Compared with baseline groups significant gains, both statistically and educationally, were achieved across a broad range of literacy measures, both at 5,6 years and continuing to 6,0 years. The robustness of the effects was ascertained by a quasi-experimental design and replication across three phases and most schools. Teachers were able to accelerate the progress of these decile 1 children despite low entry profiles in components of school literacy and English language. Broad effects across all components of literacy measured including the reading of continuous text were achieved thus avoiding the specificity of effects found in other interventions. An increased number of students achieved in the average range expected for their age at 6,0 years and the high risk of underachievement in schools at baseline was greatly reduced. The professional development was also shown to be very effective when set alongside a standard for effect sizes derived from other interventions. Class size (combined with the professional development) was shown to be associated with achievement. In summary, the primary intervention was associated with substantial gains for children in literacy after a year at school.

The primary intervention also had a powerful effect in changing teachers' attitudes, expectations and understandings about literacy acquisition during the first year of schooling. Teachers' indicated that they had learned to teach for early strategies and to observe and respond to children's behaviours in a more specific and focussed way. With increased effectiveness the teachers also became more confident in accepting the responsibility for student achievement.

Those children who had been in the early childhood centres receiving the intervention and who went into schools that had received the primary intervention, experienced a combined intervention. Some of the differences apparent at 5,0 years, between those who were and those who were not involved in the early childhood intervention, were still there at 5,6 years when compared with children who had had the primary intervention only. However, at 6,0 years significant gains were confined to concepts about print and there were no differences in the reading of continuous text and writing measures. The language measures for which there had been marked effects were not used at 6,0 years. This pattern of results was replicated across phases. The result suggest that there were some advantages to the combined intervention but that these were limited to areas where the early childhood intervention had had a marked effect.

A second comparison demonstrated that when children from the early childhood intervention went into classrooms without the primary professional development, their continuing progress was very similar to the group who went into classrooms with the primary intervention. This suggests that their increased expertise at entry may have allowed them to engage more effectively with a range of different programmes, or alternatively, that the teachers in some way were more able to pick up on the expertise that they had now gained.

In general, the interventions show that low progress in decile 1 schools in Otara and Mangere is neither inevitable nor immutable. They demonstrate that it is possible for educators in early childhood and primary classroom settings to 'pick up the pace' of teaching and learning to enable children in low decile schools to make accelerated progress in school reading and writing. Their achievement at the end of the first year of school can be like any other child in New Zealand at 6,0 years.

The descriptions of these interventions and their underlying frameworks included in the report add to the pool of research both local and international on

the effective teaching of early literacy and language within communities with diverse culture and language. In addition the theoretical base adopted offers a basis for understanding the acquisition processes for these children. The results of the interventions not only provide a demonstration of effective practice but also give a vision of what is possible.

The report concludes by noting several implications. These include the need for further professional

development in those Pacific Islands language group centres which were not involved and the assessment of children's bilingual and biliteracy development. Further professional development in primary schools is needed to sustain gains made through the first year intervention, and smaller class sizes are of importance for effective teaching in year one. Children must be followed over time to ascertain long-term effects of the interventions

Observation: contributions from NZKI Board members

Winners, who needs them?

Phil Wylie

Nelson District Kindergarten Association

NZKI Board Member

does not matter whether it is sport or school, but for a long time now we have seen a move towards participation as the main reason for doing anything. This seems to be brought about because of a desire to ensure children do not see themselves as losers. Some people believe that we could do irreparable damage if children think they are losers. But could the exact opposite in fact be true?

Should we prevent children from experiencing the joy of winning just because we don't want them to lose? Recently my 11-year-old son and two school friends entered a nationally run web page design competition. I was with him at the time that he found out that they had won. The look on his face was something that will stick with me for a long time. He was just buzzing for days. Had there been no winners, or losers for that matter, then this would have just been another thing he participated in and he would not have experienced that joy and feeling of pride that went with it.

We can all probably remember the days of standing by the letterbox waiting for our exam results. We knew that if we had lost then it was back to school to repeat the year we had just done. For some of us this was the motivation that drove us to work hard during the year to ensure that it did not happen. For those that did not make the grade it was disappointing, but most of them happily went back the next year and worked a bit harder and then experienced the joy of winning when the results came in the next time. Nowadays students don't fail. It does not matter what marks they get they just move through the system without being held accountable.

At junior sports we are seeing children being encouraged to participate, which is great. But some

codes have a policy of not keeping scores because they don't want children to think they have lost. The question I would ask is what's the point? We play sport for enjoyment and some of the best games I ever played in we lost. But the feeling of winning is something to remember. Sure it hurt to lose but it did not do me irreparable damage.

In recent years our national sports teams seem to have lost that desire to win. Having just had a weekend in which the Silver Ferns threw away the best chance they have had to win a series against Australia, the Black Socks lost a game against Australia for the first time in thirteen years, our cricket team could not bowl over an Aussie invitation team and the Soccer Kings lost their fourth game in row. I have to ask why? On paper all of these teams are capable of winning. So what went wrong? Could it be that after years of being told "its not the winning that counts" that that is just what they believe?

Bill Gates is often quoted as having said, "Life's not fair, get over it." A friend pointed out that "Getting over it" doesn't have to be a negative experience, she stated that her father called it "character building" - which to her always meant pretty low on the fun scale at the time, but enriching in the long run.

If we don't teach our children to lose at an early age then when will they learn? For some of our kids the first time they fail or lose at anything is when a girlfriend or boyfriend dumps them. This seems to happen around the age of sixteen or seventeen and in some cases has drastic consequences. New Zealand has one of the highest rates of youth suicide in the Western World. As a police officer dealing with this type of tragedy is one of the hardest parts of the job. For boys in particular

a lot of the time the story is the same. They have always been popular amongst schoolmates, good at sport, have never failed at school, (because no one does) and then out of the blue they get dumped. The letters left behind seem to say the same things "Sorry Mum and Dad but I just can't go on." Most of us will probably remember that feeling. You think your world has come to an end and you don't think you can go on. But for most of us this was not the first time we had failed, and we had felt like this before. So we picked ourselves up and just "got over it". But just imagine what it would have been like if we had never felt that feeling before. If this was the first time we felt like a

loser. Could we have carried on or could have taking our lives be seen as the only option?

Participation is great but life is full of winners and losers. We can do our young people out of what I call the principle of balance. If you're only ever a little bit sad, you can only ever be a little bit happy and vice versa. The same can be said about the feeling of winning verses the feeling of losing. Life is for living and these experiences are enrichment. Let's not let our young people grow up only partially living. I believe that it is time for us to teach our children that it is okay to lose. But to do this there must always be winners.

Early Childhood Advisory Committee (ECAC)

NZKI is a member of ECAC. Who or what is this group and what is its function?

Ann Dickason

Chief Adviser Early Childhood

The Early Childhood Advisory Committee was established by the Secretary for Education, Dr Maris O'Rourke, as a result of a number of changes to early childhood education announced in the 1991 Budget.

The Early Childhood Advisory Committee, originally named the Early Childhood Consultative Committee, first met near the end of 1991. The invited committee was comprised of representatives from New Zealand Playcentre Federation, Pacific Islands Association of Aotearoa, New Zealand Childcare Association, Crippled Children's Society, New Zealand Family Day Care Association, Barnardo's, New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union, Combined Early Childhood Union of Aotearoa, Montessori, and the Early Childhood Council. Since the initial meeting you will note that there has been a number of changes to names of early childhood organisations.

The role of the Early Childhood Consultative Committee, meeting on a regular basis, was to work with and advise the Ministry of Education on the implementation of the changes in early childhood education. Once these changes were completed, the role of the Committee was discussed with the Committee. Members felt there was need for the Committee to continue to meet on a regular basis, but its name should be changed to the Early Childhood Advisory Committee, ECAC for short.

The Committee, which has no official status despite its influence, is chaired by the Secretary for Education. Other regular attendees from the Ministry include Kathy

Smith, Group Manager, Ross Boyd, Senior Manager Education Management Policy, Cathy Diggins, Team Leader, Ann Dickason, Chief Adviser Early Childhood, and Pauline McLeod, Advisory Officer. The Committee meets usually five times a year, at approximately six or eight week intervals. The purpose of the meetings is to advise and update members on Ministry initiatives and strategies in relation to early childhood education and to learn from members about trends, future plans and issues of concern to them. The agenda includes a 'round robin' where committee members provide an overview of early childhood education from the perspective of their organisation, and raise issues related to early childhood education. On occasion, officials from other government departments or agencies and guests with particularly relevant expertise or knowledge are invited to meet with the group.

From a policy perspective, ECAC meetings provide an additional forum for raising issues with the sector early in the policy development process. ECAC representatives add considerable value to debates - in fact, I cannot imagine discussion about early childhood matters without ECAC!

Since the Committee was established there have been a few changes in representation on the group. Membership is by the invitation of the Secretary, and although not every early childhood education organisation is directly represented at meetings, their views are effectively advocated through umbrella organisations.

Ministry of Social Policy, Department of Work and Income and Child, Youth and Family Services officials

discuss items of mutual interest with members for an hour before ECAC meetings, and from time to time, Education Review Office staff consult with the group at ERO's national office after the ECAC meeting. From

the beginning, the Minister of Education of the day has made a point of attending ECAC meetings soon after taking on the portfolio, a visit much appreciated by members.

The Gender Gap in Literacy

Jenny Braaksma

Head Teacher York Street Kindergarten

Kindergartens Wairarapa Inc

I have just completed an A.S.T. paper on Emergent Literacy. I chose as my assignment The Gender Gap in Literacy. My choice was made due to the difficulty I have working with groups of boys in our kindergarten, ensuring that the transition to more formal literacy at school is one of ease and success.

I had the chance to read many research and theories some of which I have presented here in condensed form.

Underachievement in boys (2000). Rupert Kirby.

Kirby provides an interesting theory suggesting the difference starts from the womb, when testosterone floods the developing child causing the brain to develop in different ways. By birth the brain has a visibly different structure called corpus callosum that is particularly larger in females. This arch of white matter connects two hemispheres of the brain, one largely emotional the other more rational. Also the heart size that is designed in boys to be larger for more physical feats. This is the result of legacy of thousands of years of hunting and gathering existence. Boys are able to respond very quickly to fight or flight. With well-developed language centres, the female mind is suited well to reflective thinking. Linking concepts in a linear way, verbalising those connections, the female mind is "risk averse". The male mind is better suited to speculative thought. Thus 70% of boys learn better by doing. Girls think, and then act; boys act, and then think.

Language Literacy (1997) Eric Wilson.

Wilson suggests that we need to rethink how we measure literacy standards and for what purpose. Literacy is not a single set of skills and it must be seen as multiple, based on life skills outside of school. For early childhood, we are fortunate that at present we are given room to teach and assess children in this way. We place much importance on child's interests and skills for life and rather than scoring well in a series of tests.

Crossing The Threshold Masculinities & the Transition to School (2001). Jenny Norris.

From her research in three early childhood education

centres and four state schools Norris found that outdoor play tended to be more supervisory with less interactive teaching strategies practised. As boys spend significant amounts of time outside they receive these teaching styles more often. Boys talk less with teachers and the teachers reinforce the notion of boys as a group than as individuals. Masculine toys did not appear to be accepted in ways that feminine positioned toys were.

Other research suggests that boys may be too immature to begin formal instruction at the age of five. An I.E.A. study showed that three out of the 32 countries surveyed where children who began school at five had large gender gaps favouring girls.

Another study found that planned, enriched socio dramatic play demonstrates increased levels of language performance. The quality of socio dramatic play can be enriched if children have shared background experiences, ample time, adequate space, realistic props, and teacher intervention in the form of play tutoring. In my teaching, working with girls comes easier as their play appears focused and organised. Boys' play moves faster and into new ideas, it is more physical and can seem less organised. As teachers we need to look for opportunity to introduce props and tutoring that will excite and interest boys leading to the extension their socio dramatic play. For example providing tools to study the outdoor environment, mobile literacy kits, bum bags for pens and pencils, clipboards, reference books for carpentry.

One of the changes in my teaching I have introduced is talking to boys about their interests, especially in the areas I don't feel comfortable with, e.g. war games, fighting role models, or Bat Man. By giving boys permission to talk about their heroes, using open-ended language we have been able to extend boys' oral language, and help develop imagination within their interest areas. We have developed books, told by boys, with language such as scary automatons, and vampires. I know that I don't have to like what they feel so passionate about but to be able to extend them I need to accept and allow them a voice.

Positive Parenting Programmes

Brenda Holdaway
Coordinator Group Triple P,
Nelson District Free Kindergarten Association

The Nelson District Free Kindergarten Association applied to the Specialist Education Service's *Project Initiative Funding for Behaviour Management* in April 2001 and their application was successful. The project was titled *Triple P Family and Teacher Support Project 2001*.

Triple P (Positive Parenting Programme) is a multilevel model of family intervention for the prevention and treatment of children's behavioural problems. The Triple P model draws on social learning, cognitive, behavioural and developmental theory, as well as research into risk factors associated with the development of social behavioural problems in children. It aims to enhance parenting skills, build positive relationships within families and promote children's development. It was developed by Dr Matt Sanders and his colleagues at the Parenting and Family Support Centre at the University of Queensland, Australia and is promoted here in New Zealand by the Healthy Families Trust in Auckland. Steven Haynes from the Healthy Families Trust came to Nelson and trained 10 early childhood educators in *The Facilitation of Standard and Group Triple P*.

As part of the project, four kindergartens ran Triple P courses for a total of 40 families. The eight-week course offers four two-hour sessions followed by four thirty-minute weekly 1:1 telephone consultations. These sessions utilise lectures, discussions, and Triple P's acclaimed *Every Parent* guide and workbook to present a range of positive parenting strategies. The *Every Parent* video provides videotaped examples from real family situations. Parents are able to tailor the course to their individual needs, using a workbook approach to choose strategies for use with their own children.

Parents are asked to complete questionnaires on their parenting skills before completing the course and again at completion and the results are loaded onto a database. The results from the courses already run, have shown that parents have increased the immediacy, consistency and use of assertive discipline, and decreased their displays of anger, irritability and verbosity when dealing with child behaviour. They also showed that there was a marked reduction in the number of problem behaviours children exhibited

and the frequency of these behaviours was decreased considerably.

A free evening seminar titled *Encouraging Desirable Behaviour and Managing Misbehaviour* was held for parents in the region and was attended by over 150 people. As a result of the evening, parents expressed an interest in attending the eight-week programme. This has created the need for a co-ordinator to be appointed to oversee the sourcing of funds to enable more courses to be run. The cost of running the course is \$125 per family. As co-ordinator of the programme, I am currently applying for funds so the *Every Parent* course can be offered to more families at a minimal cost in the greater Nelson region on an ongoing basis.

Part of the funding in the initiative was to provide a seminar for kindergarten teachers, teachers and principals of local primary schools about positive family intervention strategies and parallel behaviour management strategies. This was well supported and has seen the strategies that are being used in kindergartens being successfully followed up in the junior school classrooms.

If you would like any more information on Group Triple P, please contact the Nelson District Kindergarten Association.



We wish you and your families a happy Christmas and a safe and relaxing holiday over the New Year – from the Board of NZKI.

From the left: Richard Tattersfield, Karen Boyes, Phil Wylie, Val McCullum, Michael Meadowcroft (Vice President), Sherryll Wilson and Sally Kennedy (President)

Hari the Smokefree Friend

Shirleyanne Brown

**Project Leader, Hari the Smokefree friend
Northland Health**

Hari was created by a group of people that recognised a need for a health promotion tool that could assist in the promotion of smokefree within the early childhood education centres throughout Northland. After sharing ideas and exploring many concepts, the Hari package was developed.

The first part of the resource development was Hari. Hari is a soft toy and was named by Kaumatua Pona Matenga of Northland health. Hari which means Happy represents smokefree and is a visual reminder to all adults that where Hari is, there is no smoking. Hari's message covers smokefree kids, smokefree environments, and a totally smokefree lifestyle. Hari is a great way to spread the message of smokefree and to encourage people to move towards a totally smokefree lifestyle. Hari comes with a powerful message: *The only things you should light up around your kids are their eyes.*

Hari is a free resource that has been distributed throughout Northland centres by both Iwi and mainstream health services. The package contains: a Hari doll; a song sheet and accompanying music cassette; and Hari's story.

The Hari song is a catchy tune with simple words: Auahi kore - smokefree! Auahi kore - that's me! Auahi kore - kiwi! Auahi kore - totally!

I would like to acknowledge the organisations that have shared their creativity, skill and expertise in the development of the Hari package. They are: Hauora Whanau, the Kindergarten Association, Early Childhood Development, Pauline Hopa (Maori SIDS prevention), Phillip Harrison, Playcentre Association, Barnados, the Public Health Nurses, and the Northland Health Smokefree Team.

Smokefree Hari is the first of its kind for tamariki and centres. This is a resource that can assist you in spreading the message of smokefree. I thank you for your continued use of the Hari pack and trust Hari supports you in the promotion of Auahi kore / smokefree. If you work in a Northland early childhood and have not received your Hari package, please ring Shirleyanne on 09 4304101 ext. 7908.

Here are some stories from children who have spent time with Hari.

Zev: "Today Zev danced with Hari to some music. They



were both very happy. They could breathe, as Hari discovered Zev's home was already smokefree inside. However Hari reminded Zev's mum of the importance of not allowing Zev to see her smoke, as often children copy their parents. Good one Hari!"

Orion: "I took Hari home to my house. We had Mr Whippy ice cream with Hari. He came to the Whangarei Santa Parade with us. The big Hari the smokefree friend was there too".

Jonathan: "Today Hari came home with me. He was very happy that no one in Jonathan's family smoked. Jonathan told Hari the story of his neighbour who smoked lots and got very sick and went to hospital".

Editorial policy statement:

The views expressed in this publication are those of the contributors. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the Board of New Zealand Kindergartens Inc. (...likewise the grammar).

Te Manu Hou

As the Christmas holidays are just around the corner, consideration should be given to minimising the potential for a claim during this long break.

- ◆ Make regular checks of the premises, particularly after any bad weather.
- ◆ Ensure that all water taps are firmly closed, and sinks are clear of any object which could act as a plug. If pot plants are to be kept in water, place these in a bucket rather than the sink.
- ◆ If possible or practicable, have outside tap handles removed and replaced with key taps.
- ◆ Check that any fire hose reels are turned off at the wall tap, not just the nozzle. (Hoses will eventually burst from the pressure).
- ◆ Portable play equipment should be moved inside or into locked storage sheds.
- ◆ Arrange for grounds to be maintained in a tidy fashion.
- ◆ Check that all security lights are functioning.
- ◆ Remove all cast from premises.
- ◆ Where considered appropriate remove computers from the premises to a home location.
- ◆ Ensure computers have been fully backed up and back-up records stored off-site.
- ◆ If possible, or considered appropriate, remove shade cloths. (They are regularly stolen, slashed or jumped upon).

Please note that these are suggestions only, and not a requirement of your insurer.

FROM ALL OF US AT WILKINSON INSURANCE BROKERS, HAVE A GREAT CHRISTMAS AND A TROUBLE FREE BREAK. THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OVER THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS.



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