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FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dr Kay Hancock

Nau mai, haere mai

Welcome to our special 2024 conference issue of *Te Kōrero Pānui Tuhituhi o Aotearoa Literacy Forum NZ*. Enjoy reading a huge variety of articles from conference speakers, workshop presenters, and attendees. Lynne Grove, recipient of the Southland Literacy Association Scholarship has written a wonderful account of its variety, richness, depth, challenge, and celebration of literacy. Lynne's closing statement captures the essence of the conference experience: "Hearing from so many different voices and perspectives was a real privilege and will help me take the next steps down my own literacy pathway."

A personal highlight for me (and mentioned in several of the articles in this issue) was Dr Ann Milne's challenge (and hope) for our education system and schools to develop their critical consciousness, to "genuinely recognise all knowledge as valid and equal and that power is genuinely shared."

A huge thank you to the Southland Literacy Association for their mahi both in running such a spectacular and rewarding conference and in helping bring together this very special conference issue.

This year, instead of a national conference, the NZLA executive are planning a new professional development initiative: two one-day literacy symposiums in September, one in Hamilton and one in Christchurch. The topic is "Building resilient minds with critical literacy" and we are thrilled to have Drs Susan Sandretto and Aaron Wilson as our keynote speakers.

The NZLA executive are also continuing to provide national webinars, to highlight latest research, provide suggestions for classroom practice, and spark conversations and reflections. Our topics so far have been *Te Reo Māori in Matariki Picture Books*, *How Teachers Who Read Create Readers* (you can read more about this research by Sue McDowall in this issue of *Forum*), and *Dialogic Talk*.

The next NZLA national conference will be hosted by Wellington Literacy Association in 2025. Keep up to date with national and local literacy events by visiting nzla.org.nz/events/national

Ngā mihi ki a koutou to our presidents and councils for continuing to promote and celebrate literacy. I'd like to make a plea to readers to consider joining your local council (the name for the committees that run the regional

associations). Our councils are the foundation of the NZLA structure, providing support and fellowship to local colleagues and building professional networks. Councils are always keen to welcome new members passionate and enthusiastic about literacy to share ideas and help run events. The connections made through local councils become wonderfully enriching and long lasting and can also be a pathway to exciting leadership opportunities at both local and national level. Come and join us! To find the contact details for your local council and join the team visit nzla.org.nz/regional-councils

I'd like to finish my President's message with a heartfelt acknowledgment of the sad loss late last year of Dr Sue Dymock. Sue was a determined and dedicated advocate for evidence-based best practice and contributed hugely to teachers' professional learning. She presented at many NZLA conferences and we are grateful also for her many years of service as a member of the *Literacy Forum* Editorial Board. Sue's work has left a huge and enduring legacy to New Zealand literacy education.

Ngā manaakitanga
Yours in literacy

Dr Kay Hancock
NZLA President



Kay Hancock and Belinda Whyte (NZLA Secretary) enjoying the bus trip to Bluff

FROM THE EDITORS



Kirsten Kean



Dr Chris Thornley

Kia ora koutou katoa

Welcome to the first issue of *Literacy Forum NZ Te Kōrero Pānui Tuhituhi o Aotearoa* for 2024. This issue is predominantly a collection of work to celebrate the 45th NZLA Conference held in Invercargill last year. Given that there had been no national conference over the years of COVID restriction, this conference was a very important opportunity for presenters to showcase and share their literacy practice and research. This extremely successful event provided learning opportunities to the many delegates and we wanted to make this accessible to all our readers too. Not all of the presenters have content in this issue, some featuring in our journal later in the year.

As editors, we would like to thank and acknowledge the Southland Literacy Association and conference team who have contributed significantly to the preparation and content of Volume 39, issue 1. We also want to thank all the people from the conference programme who have provided us with articles, reports, reviews, interviews, photographs, speeches and conversations containing key messages and references for further learning. You have been a joy and privilege to work with, and we acknowledge your commitment to high quality literacy teaching and learning for children, students, teachers, researchers and professional learning providers.

Sadly, this issue is also our opportunity to pay tribute to the late Dr Sue Dymock for her significant contribution to the literacy landscape in New Zealand, including her involvement in this journal.

Reading an interview with Dr Ann Milne who presented the Marie Clay Literacy Trust Keynote Address will allow you to engage with her insights from 'Covert Stories and White Spaces'. In a thought-provoking conference presentation, Ann shed light on the impact of overlooked

narratives within literacy education. She challenged us all to use this learning to analyse our practice and its impact on tangata whenua and their education experience.

Maria Rahui-Palmer is acknowledged here as the Marie Clay Literacy Trust Travel Award recipient for 2023. We cannot do a better introduction than to use Maria's own words, "This article is a story about me, a Māori woman who happens to be a teacher". Her writing then transports us with her to Oxford and has so many messages about culture, and identity.

As always, we have a selection of book reviews for you. This time, we include literature highlighted at the conference or by Southland authors. Thank you to these reviewers, your insights are invaluable.

Then we conclude with reports from councils across the country. Here we can read about and gain ideas for amazing

literacy learning and celebration events that may work well in your region. And these highlight another exciting year ahead with an array of opportunities for their members.

We strongly encourage you to write for us. We know how busy you are but also from the conference, it was obvious that a wealth of research and practice knowledge that would benefit our learners resides with you. Maybe you have completed study and have an assignment piece that could be turned into an article, or maybe you have been working on a practice innovation and have findings about its impact on your learners. Or maybe you love writing book reviews on teacher texts or those you would use with your learners. Have a read of our guidelines [link](#) and don't hesitate to get in touch with us.

Ngā manaakitanga
Kirsten and Chris
NZLA Editors

Write for us!

Literacy Forum NZ Te Kōrero Pānui Tuhituhi o Aotearoa
welcomes articles from all literacy educators.

The national journal of the [New Zealand Literacy Association](#) (NZLA) is published three times each year and presents research, explores policies, classroom practices and children's literature.

Please contact us editor@nzla.org.nz

[Contributor Guidelines](#)

Tribute to Dr Sue Dymock

By **Dr Wendy Carss** and **Kylie Te Arihi**

Poroporoakitia

***Kua hinga tētehi rangatira i te ao reo matatini.
Ko Sue Dymock tēnei. Ko ngā poroporoaki e rere tonu ana
mōna.***

***He wahine hūmārie kua roa e whaiwhai ana i te rangahau
i hāpaitia ai ngā pūkenga me ngā mātūranga o ngā
kaiako, o ngā tauira.***

***Kua roa anō hoki e whakapau kaha ana ki ngā kaupapa
reo matatini, inā noa atu tīpaopao (dyslexia).
E tangi hotuhotu ana te ngakau i te huringa o tō tātou
mātenga reo matatini ki tua o te arai.***

***Nō reira e te māreikura, moe mai rā ki roto i ngā ringa
kaha o tō tātou Matua i te rangi.***

Remembering Dr Sue Dymock

It is with great sadness that we acknowledge the passing of Dr Sue Dymock, a long-standing member of the Waikato Literacy Association, who passed away on November 2, 2023, after a short illness.

A senior lecturer at Te Kura Toi Tangata, the School of Education, University of Waikato, Sue was internationally recognised for her ongoing research in literacy and more specifically in the field of dyslexia. Sue was passionate about supporting teachers to improve their practice; readers will be familiar with many of Sue's articles and literacy texts, often written in partnership with her mentor and friend, Tom Nicholson, Emeritus Professor of Education at Massey University. She had a strength in being able to translate research into evidence based practice for both teachers and students. She published on several occasions in our *Literacy Forum* journal, most recently with Tom in 2019 *Writing for Impact: Can we do better?* and was a member of the journal's editorial committee. During the last 12 months she and Tom also published *Dyslexia Seen Through the Eyes of Teachers* in the top peer-reviewed journal *Reading Research Quarterly*



(vol. 58 (2). Special Issue – Dyslexia). She presented at a number of both NZLA and ILA conferences over the years, as well as facilitating professional learning sessions for many schools.

In 2016, Sue was selected as a Fellow of the International Academy of Research in Learning Disabilities. *The New Zealand Dyslexia Handbook (1st ed.)* by Sue and Tom Nicholson was the runner-up for Best Resource in Higher Education in the 2015 Copyright Licensing New Zealand Education Awards. Sue was able to view the completed second edition of this handbook, with 24 accompanying videos, just prior to her passing. This was released by NZCER in November last year fulfilling Sue's wish to support researchers, teachers and students by making the latest knowledge more accessible.

Continuing her passion at a local level, Sue founded and directed the Hamilton Children's Reading Centre where over 500 students who experienced reading difficulties have learned to read at no cost over the 18 years of its existence. Throughout this time, Sue fundraised more than \$750 000 to ensure these students were well supported with 1:1 tutoring. Within the University, she received the Community Impact Research Excellence Award for her leadership and service associated with the Reading Centre.

She was a passionate teacher and educator, teaching at both graduate and undergraduate levels and many overseas students will remember Sue's guidance and pastoral care in her role as Academic Co-ordinator for International Students.

Sue was a wonderful friend and mentor to many of us, she was extremely focused and knowledgeable, held high expectations, and was instrumental in opening the doors for others to grow in their literacy leadership. She was truly inspirational in her approach and contributions to prevent reading difficulties. Her immense reach had a significant positive impact on the lives of many. Sue's legacy continues to influence the New Zealand literacy landscape.

Conference Convenor Report

NZLA 45th National Conference

By **Joyce Wakelin**

The 45th New Zealand Literacy Association Literacy Conference, held in Invercargill September 2023, served as a beacon of light for educators after the interruptions of Covid-19.

We as a committee down in the deep south were absolutely delighted with the build up and the three day event that was held at the Ascot Park Hotel. The conference showcased the latest trends and best practices in literacy education and tackled current themes that we as educators are experiencing in the classroom. This created a lot of rich collaboration, innovation and thought.

We were absolutely honoured to have a superb line up of keynote speakers, who travelled from around Aotearoa and Australia, touching on at least one of our three key conference themes:

- Structured Literacy
- Literacy across the Curriculum
- Wellbeing Hauora

The keynotes offered invaluable insights and thought provoking details for all conference participants to implement in their respective contexts. We received a lot of positive feedback with regards to the mix of keynote speakers who attended the conference. I will never forget the 'white sesame seeds' segment that Southlander keynote speaker Andrea Greer spoke about. If you know, you know haha!

To complement the keynotes, we offered over 35 workshops that provided attendees with knowledge, hands-on learning experiences and practical tools to enhance their literacy instruction. Covering an assortment of topics within our three conference themes, ranging from literacy instruction to digital literacy strategies to financial literacy, these workshops catered to educators across all levels, ensuring that every participant could find sessions relevant to their professional needs and interests.

Between keynotes and workshops, attendees were able to browse and purchase literacy items from one of our 20 different trade stall exhibitors. A special mention to Scholastic, StepsWeb and The Life Magazine who were our Gold Sponsors at the Conference – thank you!

We were very fortunate to raise a large amount of funds for the NZLA Books for Oceania initiative over the conference period. This means we and Scholastic New Zealand are able to send over \$19,000 worth of books to Tongan Schools. If you purchased from the Books for Oceania stand at the conference, a big thank you must be said to you! You have helped students with their literacy and to develop a love for reading! A special mention and thank you also to Sally Morch and Rob Southam and her fantastic team who came down south from Scholastic – thank you!

We were absolutely astounded and grateful for the impressive number of registered attendees that came to the conference! Over 440 enthusiastic educators from local, national and international schools, educational institutions, and participants from across New Zealand.

Additionally, the presence of overseas and local delegates, literacy presidents, authors and storytellers added flavour to the event, fostering cross-cultural exchange and enriching the collective learning experience. To name a few, Dr. Katina Zammit the current president of the Australian Literacy Educators Association, Jeanne Bender, American Author of the *Lindie Lou* Adventure Series and Marcus Winter who is also known as 'The Sandman.' It was an absolute pleasure to have met and collaborated with these three extraordinary people!

A highlight of the conference was the enchanting Author's Evening event, held at the beautiful Hideaway venue on the outskirts of Winton. Three distinguished authors captivated the audience with their literary journeys and insights and the power of storytelling with a love for reading. Their passion for literacy was very moving.

Conference attendees also had the opportunity to taste southern delicacies such as our famous creamy cheese rolls, blue cod and locally made ciders. Many also took up the opportunity to visit the southernmost part of the South Island, Bluff and to grab a photo with the iconic Bluff sign. This was followed by attendees being able to explore the new Invercargill CBD. These

outings provided a welcome break from conference activities, allowing participants to immerse themselves in the cultural heritage, southern food and natural beauty of the region.

Lastly, a few more special thank yous to the following people who helped make the conference possible, we as a committee and I couldn't have done it without your help. A massive thank you to all Southland Literacy Association committee members, the NZLA exec team, Woodlands Full Primary School staff and the SLA conference subcommittee – Kirsten, Gina, Rosie, Tracy and Helen.

In conclusion, the 45th New Zealand Literacy Association Literacy Conference was a resounding success, serving as a catalyst for advancing literacy education and fostering collaboration among educators and advocates. As attendees departed with renewed inspiration and a wealth of new ideas, the impact of the conference throughout New Zealand's education landscape will help shape the future of literacy for generations to come.



**Lynne Grove**

Lynne Grove is HoD English at Aparima College in Riverton, Southland. Originally from England, she was inspired to become a teacher by her own teachers. She worked in libraries, primary and secondary schools before coming 'just for a year' to New Zealand in 1995. Here she discovered Playcentre, Reading Recovery, the Dan Davin Literary Foundation and extraordinary New Zealand writers. She reads and writes for pleasure whenever she can.

Lighting the Literacy Pathway

My experiences at the 45th NZLA Conference

'The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go'. Dr Seuss's rhythm-and-rhyme promotion of literacy could be applied with gusto to the NZLA Conference this year. I did not need to travel far in distance, but I certainly 'went places' in terms of my understanding and respect for this elemental taonga that we share – literacy.

Firstly, the sheer number of delegates, speakers and stallholders crammed into the Ascot Park Hotel proved to me that interest in literacy is alive and well in Aotearoa. The buzz on the opening morning did not fizzle or fray through three jam-packed days. As a group of literacy practitioners, we pack a powerful punch already, and we were all keen to hone our craft 'even during our holidays' as keynote speaker Lyn Stone reminded us wryly.

Yet, it was not just about us. From the get-go Kathryn Berkett reminded us that our gaze must be student-centred to have any hope of making a difference to those in our charge. Her comparison between the learning needs of her own children rang true with my own classroom experience. Indeed, literacy is that curious hybrid – a creative science, with multiple variables to consider.

Workshops further aided my understanding of some of those variables. I truly appreciated the honesty and courage shown by workshop leaders who were willing to share their own experiences and experiments in teaching literacy. *Te Mātaiāho* featured prominently, particularly the 'reading for pleasure' element, which, perhaps, is the most refreshing part of the refreshed

curriculum. Amongst many others, I loved the way Jessica Copping wove this aspect into an Adventure Log for her Year 9 boys, and how Marcus Winter conveyed the joy of pūrākau through his sand stories.

The conference was steeped in practical advice, for example Chris Cole's proven ideas on how to empower dyslexic learners and their families. And, as my practice is mostly linked to secondary school students, Betsy Sewell's suggestions were genuinely helpful for meeting the needs of older readers.

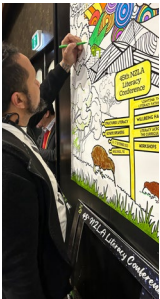
Lighting a pathway literally shines light into the darkness, and there were many aspects of the conference that challenged me, both in my practice and my thinking. For example, Dr Ann Milne's confronting presentation of

the extent to which we recognise the literacy needs of our rangatahi. Hearing from so many different voices and perspectives was a real privilege and will help me take the next steps down my own literacy pathway.

Feeding the mind, spirit and body was so very welcome at this stage of the year when energy is flagging. The chance to escape to the garden to chat over morning tea and lunch was a real treat and gave time to digest and share the myriad ideas that had been placed so tantalisingly on the table. I am so grateful to the organisers of this conference for all their hard work before, during and after the conference. And I am looking forward to returning to school to share a smorgasbord of tasty literacy morsels with colleagues and students.









Dr Ann Milne

Kirsten interviews Dr Ann Milne, who delivered the Marie Clay Conference Address in 2023.

Dr Ann Milne is a Pākehā educator, writer, researcher, and former school principal whose work challenges the whiteness of our education system and focuses on a critically conscious, culturally sustaining learning approach centred on students' cultural identities. Her book, *Coloring in the White Spaces: Reclaiming Cultural Identity in Whitestream Schools*, was published in 2016 and her services to education were recognised in 2020 when she was appointed a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit. Since retiring from her principal's role five years ago, she established **Ann Milne Education** and **Ann Milne Online** to share her long leadership experience in this area with schools and institutions who want to think differently about their practice.

Covert Stories and White Spaces

An Interview with Dr Ann Milne

Keywords: *Covert stories, white spaces, Māori learners, literacy*

What do you mean when you talk about “covert texts” teachers tell their Māori and non-Māori learners?

Covert texts and stories are powerful, and they are everywhere. What message does a Māori child get when they are labelled ‘priority learners’ as if they are somehow deficient and need more help, more support, more attention than everyone else, and when they are made to feel that they are a problem? Our education system hasn’t prioritised their needs for decades so why do we pretend that has changed, and why do we think that Māori children and their whānau don’t see right through that pretence?

What do schools and teachers expect their Māori children to feel when the school goes all out for Māori Language Week, for example, and then reverts to the odd sign here and there, labels sprinkled around display boards and websites, and no te reo Māori offered as a full-time learning option for the remaining 51 English Language Weeks of the year?

Covert stories, by their very description, hide in the shadows of our thinking, our classrooms, and in our practice. They lurk in secondary school timetables where Māori students have to trade off te reo Māori against another subject they would like to choose because it’s not a primary option. They damage learners in racist practices like streaming and ability grouping. They are in our heads when we rationalise why we can’t make

change, instead of focusing on how we can, when we normalise and tolerate our failure, and accept that Māori children will be collateral damage in our system and structures, and when fear of a ‘backlash’ renders us paralysed to challenge the status quo. Covert texts are rife in our curriculum, both hidden and not-so-hidden. The need to mandate Aotearoa Histories is one example. Our failure to ask questions about whose knowledge counts, who decides, whose definitions of success and achievement matter, who is included, and who is left out gives all learners clear messages about who and what is important.

Covert stories have a whakapapa, a genealogy. They originate in our very Western, white picture of what schools look like, and what we think of as ‘normal’ in teaching and learning. We experience them in our own schooling and rarely question them. After all, our parents and grandparents had a similar experience, and in fact, the ‘back to basics’ brigade would like us to return to that time warp, ignorant of the fact that it didn’t work for many of our children then and won’t work now. Covert stories are then perpetuated in our teacher training, by our universities that deliver that training, and then we bring them to our classrooms where we continue to inflict their damage on the same groups of children year after year, then act surprised and blame the children when we fail to engage them in what we think they need.

Covert stories have layers and depth. At the surface level, your mispronunciation of a beautiful Māori name, often chosen to remember a tupuna or an important

event, is often explained away as you are trying, so the child should appreciate your effort. That’s the overt story. Underneath that level, the covert story that the child, their whānau, and the other children receive, is that you can’t be bothered – it’s not worth any extra effort. You will happily continue to knowingly mangle their name, disrespecting all it stands for.

In my keynote, I used Barbara Love’s (2004) description of “majoritarian” stories as “the description of events as told by members of dominant/majority groups, accompanied by the values and beliefs that justify the actions taken by dominants to ensure their dominant position.” Solórzano and Yosso (2002) explain that “white privilege is often expressed through majoritarian stories.” Majoritarian stories are covert stories.

These stories normalise privilege, render it invisible, assume universal ‘truths’ and knowledge, promote schools as neutral and apolitical, and endorse the myth of meritocracy: that we all have equal opportunity and we can all succeed on our merits, if we tried harder, read more, did our homework, had good study habits, or better parents.

Covert texts and stories are racist.

Your keynote emphasises the need for active and intentional elimination of covert stories. What could learners expect when educators achieve this in their practice, and what advice do you have for educators who may be unsure where to start addressing covert stories and white spaces in their classrooms?

When we do the work to identify and then eliminate covert texts and white spaces in our practice, we become ever vigilant about the way they can creep back in when we least expect it. The keywords in this question are ‘active’ and ‘intentional’. Neutrality is an action, a decision to sit on the fence, do nothing, and accept the status quo.

When teachers make a commitment to understand and then eradicate covert texts and white spaces from their practice, they commit to developing students who are critically conscious, who question, debate, have a keen sense of injustice, are actively anti-racist, and who understand how society works to intentionally keep some groups in the margins. They understand the importance of always seeking the root cause of issues instead of dealing with the symptoms, and they know that the symptoms are not their fault. To achieve that understanding and critical consciousness in our students means moving out of our teacher comfort zones and taking on the same interrogating and questioning ourselves.

Take the example of our hyper-focus on Māori boys’ writing and what we imply to Māori boys when we label them as deficient in all our achievement goals and strategic plans. What do we really think the cause is? I wrote in a blog post, entitled *Why not White Boys’ Writing?*

Do we think White boys have an additional writing or reading gene that our Māori kids missed out on? Or do we think they had better parenting perhaps – you know, bedtime stories, books in the home,

and all that? Or, here’s a thought, could it be that the whole system, the way we set up and structure schools, our teacher training, our obsession with copying failed policy from other countries which also marginalise their indigenous learners, the knowledge we value – and measure – is also White and it, therefore, benefits the children whose values match, and whose values are embedded in and reproduced by our schools? This is not to overlook the fact that some boys struggle with literacy, regardless of their ethnicity. It means the reasons, and the solutions, are different.

Active and intentional elimination of covert texts is our job and I am often asked by teachers, but where do I start? The reality is, we don’t know what we don’t know. So, my first suggestion is always to learn more. We have to do the reading, researching, listening, and, above all, opening up our understanding that other groups do not necessarily think the same as we do. By ‘we’ I mean Pākehā/White Western educators and society in general.

What would we do if we all woke up tomorrow, as we did during the Covid pandemic, and found that ‘normal’ had been turned on its head? Now, Māori learners were outperforming Pākehā students in every school across the country. Their numbers were growing; they were fluently bilingual, secure in their Māori identity, and were destined to become our future leaders. Pākehā students were at the bottom of all our achievement data and we learned that the shift was the result of Māori children being able to learn and

engage in schools that mirrored their values and beliefs and sustained their cultural identity—already a fact for Kura Kaupapa Māori—but this was no longer happening for Pākehā students.

Overnight, there would be an urgent national response. We would suddenly be motivated to know how this learning made a difference. We would question why we didn't know the importance of sustaining culture and we would flock to courses and learning to fill that gap in our training and knowledge. We wouldn't be waiting to be invited, or for our colleagues or our communities to all be on board. That urgency is what is lacking in our current situation for our Māori learners. We happily make token changes that tick our boxes and tolerate the fact that we are oblivious to the size of the change we need to make. It is not the job of Māori to fix our racism or undo colonising practice—that's on us. The biggest change we need to make, and the place we all need to start, is in our own thinking.

Can you share success stories or examples of educators who have actively worked to eliminate “covert texts” and “white spaces” in their classrooms, and the positive outcomes for Māori learners?

The best examples are those learning environments that have been developed by Māori, for Māori—Kōhanga Reo, Puna Reo, Kura Kaupapa Māori, and Kura-ā-Iwi where texts and stories, both covert and overt, are intentionally and unapologetically Māori. That is not to say that the elimination of covert texts and white spaces can't happen in what I call our Whitestream schools. We have to work harder to achieve that.

I shared in my keynote that schools I have been working with are using the development of Graduate or Learner Profiles to focus on what they are trying to achieve. When we spell out specifically where we are at now, honestly identifying and naming our racist, covert, hidden assumptions and 'norms', we can then begin to tackle and get rid of them. We can eliminate them by being specific about our goals. What does a child leaving your school look like? What do they know and understand? What contribution will they make to their families, and their communities, what sort of leaders will they be? What languages will they speak, and how secure is their cultural identity?

While some elements of your graduate profile will be common across all cultural groups, such as Western learning outcomes in reading, writing, maths, and NCEA, the question to ask always is, “What else?” What cultural knowledge? What Māori knowledge for Māori learners, for example? That means engaging with and listening to your Māori community, asking ‘and/and’ questions instead of ‘and/or’. It is the absolute right of Māori whānau under Te Tiriti o Waitangi to expect their child can learn through te reo Māori, to have both Māori and English languages and that adding Māori will not detract somehow from their other learning.

To share success stories, we have to redefine what we mean by ‘success’ and achievement. The graduate profiles do that. Kia Aroha Campus is a Year 0 to 13 designated-character school in Otara, South Auckland, where I was privileged to be the principal and where my daughter now has that role. Kia Aroha's

goal, embedded in their graduate profile, is to develop 'Warrior-Scholars' defined by the school as:

Young people, secure in their own identity, competent and confident in all aspects of their cultural world, critical agents for justice, equity and social change, with all the academic qualifications and cultural knowledge they need to go out and change the world.

If this is the goal for graduating students at Year 13, what does that look like at Years 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11? With the addition of Years 0-6 in the school in 2023 they have now reviewed their graduate profile progressions to include the younger year levels. Warrior Scholar attributes are now an expectation for Year 11, and the goal for graduating students is that they will be revolutionaries. These goals are used as the drivers of curriculum and assessment and are articulated clearly by students, whānau, and the community.

How can we prepare new educators to recognise and challenge covert stories and white spaces as they develop their own teaching strategies within our classrooms?

There is no longer any excuse for our universities and teacher training providers to ignore this crucial learning in our teacher preparation. Unfortunately, I still hear beginning teachers mispronouncing Māori names, hurriedly gathering 'Tiriti activities' just before Waitangi Day, and teaching about racism as a theme in stories without any understanding that each of these seemingly benign actions, well-meaning

as they might be, tell Māori learners they don't matter, or they only matter sometimes.

There are plenty of online resources for help with pronunciation. Te Tiriti and anti-racism learning should be embedded in every lesson plan, in every curriculum area, every day. They are not topics you go to visit or to learn about as if it is happening somewhere else not, for example, when your Māori children right in front of your nose are dealing with racism and racial micro-aggressions on a daily basis.

Other resources include the Teaching Council's Unteach Racism app, and my free download, Seven Steps to Audit your White Spaces, with an eighth step to audit your virtual learning spaces. Again, the point is that you have to be prepared to do the work and the learning to develop strategies that identify and eliminate covert stories and white spaces.

Looking ahead, what are your hopes for all young Māori students within the education system of Aotearoa?

I look at my own whānau and my grandchildren and great-grandchildren whose first language is Māori and who are fluent speakers of te reo Māori. That has taken us three generations of intentional choice and hard work to achieve. That's my hope for all tamariki and rangatahi Māori in our education system, but it shouldn't be such hard work.

I look forward to the day when full-immersion Māori-medium options will be available in every school, or at least in every community, and where

sustaining Māori children's Māori identity will be a responsibility that schools understand and accept and Māori children don't have to travel out of their community to access this option.

My hope for all children is that our education system and schools will develop their critical consciousness; they will have the tools to understand power, equity, and injustice and be equipped to change those. Our education system will have pluralistic goals that expect multiple distinctive groups to function separately and equally without requiring assimilation into the dominant society, and we will genuinely recognise all knowledge as valid and equal and that power is genuinely shared.

I believe those opportunities will happen when we stop being afraid to name and acknowledge the whiteness and the racism inherent in what we now accept as normal in our schools. We will be actively anti-racist and our children will have the tools to identify the covert stories and texts that currently fuel the barriers to their learning. Māori children will be able to engage in education all day, every day, in every classroom, in every subject, "as Māori."



Dr Christine Braid

I trained as a teacher from 1978-1980 with an extra year to complete the B.Ed. I taught for 12 years. I trained as a Reading Recovery teacher in 1986 and continued in that teaching, along with classroom teaching, until 1996. In 1997, I came into the university space to teach in Initial Teacher Education. From 2000, I have been a facilitator of literacy PLD with Massey University. I completed a Diploma of Children's Literature and a Master's of Education, completing a thesis on using children's picturebooks with Y 5/6 children. I was part of the Massey University Early Literacy Project and completed a PhD during that time. My PhD focused on teaching methods for beginning readers. I remain a practitioner and I am in classrooms every week and mostly many times a week in my role as a facilitator of literacy PLD.

Teaching Literacy: the best of all worlds

Keynote Presentation

By **Dr Christine Braid**

Keywords: *Simple view of reading, simple view of writing, cognitive foundations framework, balanced instruction*

I was honoured to be invited to speak at the 2023 NZLA conference in Invercargill. This written piece is based on the ideas I conveyed in my longer talk and in my workshops on sentence building and picturebooks. I am thankful to be able to present the ideas in this issue of *Forum*.

I have been thinking a lot about literacy lately and I have been thinking a lot about teaching. These are two things that I love. Literacy is a cognitively complex task. Understanding how we become literate is vital to teaching literacy. Teaching is also complex but at its heart, it is about making new and sometimes complex things straightforward for our learners.



My bookshelf represents the things I need to be the best I can be in literacy teaching and in supporting others in their literacy teaching.

I have hundreds of books that are literature for children: picturebooks, novels, poetry, nonfiction. I also have books about teaching and literacy, including advances in scientific studies for understanding the field of studies. I think these books reflect what we need as a basis to good literacy teaching. The best of teacher knowledge and the best of literature.

There have been a lot of advances in how to teach children to read and write. Some of the advances require a change in teaching and this is not necessarily comfortable for all of us. For me, some of this discomfort started with realising there was a whole body of knowledge and a massive body of research that I didn't know. Some of that not knowing is my own fault in that I did not read things that went against my set way of thinking. I was a classic confirmation bias person. I also thought I didn't need to know more as I was a good teacher and most of my students read well enough. I was trained in Reading Recovery and a literacy facilitator. Surely, I had all I needed.

But in 2012, I was forced into reading things beyond my bubble because I was teaching in the Massey Graduate Diploma of Teaching and the basis of that course took me out of my usual readings. Venturing into studies I hadn't read before and finding out more about the cognitive studies of reading has made me aware of knowledge necessary for me to be the best teacher I can be for as many students as I can be.

Knowledge is a pathway to being empowered as a teacher. When we are faced with new knowledge, it can feel like we don't know anything. This just

isn't true. Experienced teachers, even without *science of reading* knowledge, know a lot about teaching and about literacy and, most importantly, about their learners. But when we add knowledge from scientific studies of reading and more knowledge about the written system to our years of teaching experience, we have a wonderful combination in the classroom.

Change is necessary

I have always loved teaching literacy and still do. I love immersing children in stories and poems. I love sharing books and then having an in-depth discussion with the children. I enjoy helping children develop as writers. I have been confident with my capability in approaches such as shared and guided reading/writing and of course reading aloud from wonderful books. The knowledge I was missing involved how the writing system works and about how the spoken word maps to the written word. Knowing how the writing system works enables us to be effective teachers of reading and writing (Castles et al, 2018) for all the students we teach.

As a teacher, I had a very good implicit knowledge for literacy, in that I was a competent reader, speller and writer, but I would say that I didn't have enough knowledge to teach about the code of English print well. This lack of knowledge particularly disadvantaged me for teaching children with any literacy difficulty. I still carry the burden of those children I could not help when I was teaching more implicitly and without the in-depth knowledge of the writing system and the cognitive aspects involved in reading. I remember these children by name.

I did, of course, teach children many of the things that are part of the code aspect of learning to read and write. I am thankful that I taught handwriting daily right through the age levels, even if I may not have known all the research for why to do that. We now know that capability in handwriting affects literacy outcomes overall (Graham, 2010). I am thankful that the struggling readers and spellers in my class will have benefitted from my inclusion of explicit handwriting lessons. I taught spelling but not necessarily systematically and I taught about word patterns and the role of suffixes. It isn't that I didn't teach about the code of print, but the teaching was not as explicit or systematic as I would now use.

I have added so much knowledge about the system of print and how this works for the language of English in particular, and it is something that I keep on learning about. Now with this knowledge, I love teaching foundation knowledge such as the alphabetic principle and foundation skills such as blending to decode words. I have the knowledge to teach spelling rules and patterns that I previously didn't know how to teach well. I love watching the light go on for learners as they listen to

an explanation and then start to self-teach once an initial foundation is laid.

What is useful to know?

When it comes to change, it is more than whose theory is right or wrong. It is not a battle of ideas. It is about what works for learners. What works for learners has to do with what happens in the brain as we learn to read. Knowledge from studies in reading science empowers us as teachers. This teacher knowledge is the antidote for feeling unsure in our teaching.

I find it useful to have a key model to refer to, a sort of true north to guide my practice. The *simple view of reading* (SVR) (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) is useful for showing that the two key components for being able to read well are the decoding (word recognition) skills and the oral language basis (language comprehension) of what you need to read. It is important to see that this is not phonics or comprehension but phonics *and* oral language comprehension to get to *reading comprehension*. Reading comprehension is a product of both components together. The formula helps us as teachers to see what we need to include in teaching practice.



Figure 1. Model of the simple view of reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986)

The SVR also enables us to see that each of the components need to be strong. To be capable in reading comprehension, you need strong phonics knowledge and strong language understanding; a weakness in either or both components will result in weak reading comprehension. This is the true balance of components in reading skill.

More recently, the SVR has been expanded in the cognitive foundations framework (CFF) to show the subskills of each component needed in competent reading (Tunmer & Hoover, 2019). I find this model useful for not only showing the skills needed but also considering the interactions among the skills. For success in word recognition, there must be an interaction between letter knowledge and phonemic awareness. Background knowledge and inferencing connects with sentence structure and word meanings as the basis of language comprehension. The building blocks also indicate that weakness in any skill will result in a weaker structure.

The CFF can help us to consider our teaching of reading. How do we include each of these foundation blocks; what do teachers need to know and do to ensure we have capable readers?

For the teaching of writing, the simple view of writing (SVW) (Berninger, 1999) is a useful framework for identifying the important components of being a writer. The model shows that transcription, composition, and executive function are key things to consider in teaching writing. Some of the aspects of writing are also aspects of reading but with the added challenge of producing the words and sentences and being able to transpose those ideas onto a page. The importance of handwriting cannot be underestimated and has a major contribution to writing outcomes through all year levels. Composing a sentence and understanding the rules that govern sentences is a vital skill where good teacher knowledge is needed (Walls & Braid, 2023).

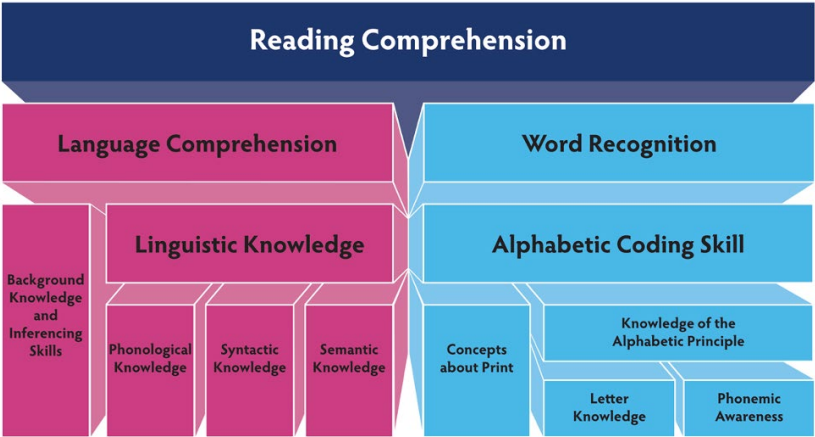


Figure 2. Cognitive foundations framework (Tunmer & Hoover, 2019)

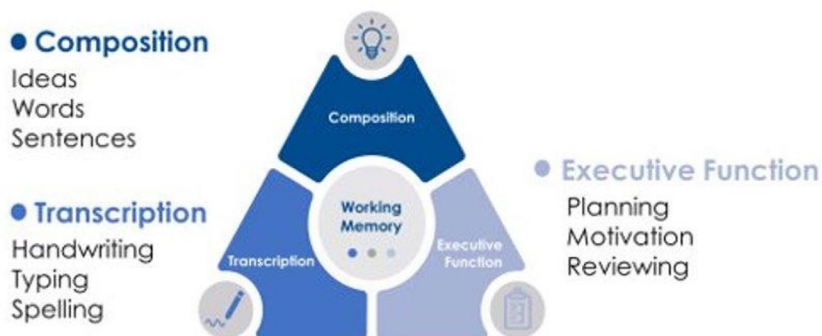


Figure 3. Simple view of writing (Berninger, 1999)

Beyond the models

The models identify the key component skills that are necessary. The models do not explain how to teach reading and writing. Teaching well is a combination of explicit and implicit practice (Hempenstall, 2016). Explicit teaching demands high cognitive attention from learners. Implicit learning is what happens once learners start to apply and question and see for themselves. Learners need explicit and implicit opportunities for optimum learning but the balance of each will be different for different content and different learners. Explicit teaching requires high levels of teacher knowledge, but knowing how to make the most of implicit opportunities is also demanding of teacher knowledge.

Teaching early readers and writers requires that we know about the writing system and how it works. Some of the concepts that I have found I need for understanding the writing system include phonemes, graphemes, alphabetic principle, morphemes, and vowel sounds. I find it useful to know how speech sounds are formed

and that vowel sounds are always an unobstructed sound while a consonant stops the airflow. I need to understand co-articulation (phonemes affect each other once they blend to next phoneme), orthographic mapping, the role of handwriting, and much more. I need a technical knowledge of how a sentence is constructed. It is beyond the scope of this article to examine all these concepts, but we do need our training to include the knowledge we need to teach well.

A systematic approach to teaching about the code of print involves using a progression of knowledge and skills, often as a scope and sequence. A phonics scope and sequence shows how to teach phonics code starting simply (consonant vowel consonant (CVC) words such as m-a-t and g-o-t and simple suffixes -s, -ed, -ing) and progressing to more complex code (CVVC) with vowel teams for long vowel spellings, and adding affixes. Understanding this sequence is important for teaching. A book series, likely decodable texts for the early step, will support teaching through a scope and sequence.

Step 1 a	Step 1 b	Step 1 c	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Short vowel closed syllable Single letters Consonant vowel consonant words CVC	short vowel closed syllable Doublets ff ll ss ck CVCC Consonant digraphs th sh ch CCVC CVCC	Short vowel closed syllable Consonant blending (b-l; c-r; s-t) C-C VC CVC-C C-C VC-C Adding -s	Long vowel open syllable (he, go, my) vowel teams (eg ai, ee, oa, igh, a-e etc) CVVC CVCe Adding -ed, -ing	Other vowels -r control (eg ar or er); diphthong (oi/ow); Later -r (air, ear, eer, are) glued units (eg -all)	Affixes and all syllable types All patterns in 2 and multi syllable words Adding affixes Morphology

Figure 4. A general progression of word patterns (Braid, 2022)

Each book series has a specific scope and sequence, but I find it is useful to consider a general progression to give a broad overview. Each book series should be able to support any teaching in the following general progression.

The explicit and the implicit opportunities

Recently I was teaching children the rules for dropping the e or doubling the consonant when adding a vowel suffix, such as -ed or -ing.

As a good speller, I have just known this, but as a teacher of spelling I need to know why so I can provide useful explanations for the learners. The work of information from Dyslexiclogic.com (<https://www.dyslexiclogic.com/>) has helped me with a useful way to teach this concept. In a year 6 classroom, I was explaining the cut and stick/double and stick rule. We were compiling lists in two columns, one to cut the e and stick on the suffix -ed and the other to double the consonant and stick on the suffix -ed.

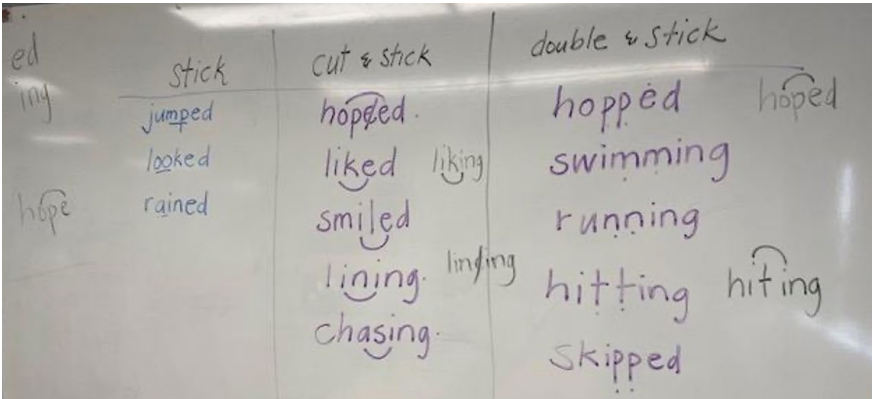


Figure 5. Explicit teaching of a spelling rule

I moved on to show adding -ing followed the same rules as the -ed. I changed like to liking, removing the e to add the -ing. A child said “But why is this not lik-ing?” (lick). This child was thinking like a scientist. He was seeking the patterns where a CVC would be a short vowel. As he was learning the rule, he was thinking and wondering. He then asked if the letter ‘i’ in the -ing was acting like the magic ‘e’. These are the moments that show the teaching is working. Teaching and learning move beyond rules and lists of words into generating. This is the subconscious in the background learning; it is boosted or triggered by timely instruction (Seidenberg, 2022). The subconscious is the ‘fast’ system. The explicit is the ‘slow’ system. Learning depends on both. Long term, success in learning relies on the self-teaching that comes about as learners make connections for themselves.

I would not have taught this concept very well without the explicit teacher knowledge. I also need to know when to teach and how much at any one time and for whom. Seidenberg (2022) says that explicit instruction is the brief onramp to the overwhelmingly intrinsic act of reading and spelling. Only a small fraction of this system can be explicitly taught but teaching key concepts explicitly is an initial ‘must’. Statistical learning, or working out the patterns for yourself, is the mass below the surface.

In addition to helping children secure the phonics knowledge to read and spell words with ease, in writing children need to learn letter shapes and progress to getting script quickly on the page. Handwriting skill should not be underestimated nor left to chance.

Handwriting needs to be taught early and often and explicitly. Most children need to continue practising the skill for all their primary school years (Graham, 2010). I think it is the easiest and quickest ‘bang for buck’ piece of literacy teaching we can do. A short time of daily handwriting teaching could make a big difference to writing outcomes.

Language comprehension opportunities

Aside from teaching the code of print, a good literacy programme requires opportunities for students to develop in language comprehension skills. Most children arrive at school with stronger oral language than their ability to read that language in print. But language comprehension needs strengthening throughout the years at school. There are many ways to build children’s language comprehension. The CFF (Tunmer & Hoover, 2018) identifies background knowledge and inferring skills. In addition, the reading and writing models both show that vocabulary (semantics) and sentence structure (syntax) are important literacy building blocks.

There are many things we do in our classrooms that strengthen language comprehension. We can use explicit teaching and we can provide immersive and implicit opportunities. We will read aloud from stories, poems, and non-fiction texts. We will form discussion around ideas. Strategies such as *question the author* and other dialogic techniques can be taught and used for developing comprehension. We can show how the text structure acts as a guide to comprehension and teach summary statements. We can explicitly

teach vocabulary but also surround children with rich language from books and poems. We can explicitly teach sentence structure but also surround children in talk and book experiences. We can have a broad curriculum where children learn about topics that grow their background knowledge, which is vital for comprehending what we read.

Reading aloud to children is a wonderful part of a school day. The texts can be varied and reflect the backgrounds and interests of the children in the class, but also can take students beyond what they know and have experience of. Author Anne Tyler states on the website *Top 200 Anne Tyler Quotes* (<https://quote fancy.com/anne-tyler-quotes>) 'I read so I can live more than one life in more than one place'. Reading aloud to a class provides such knowledge for the listeners. A variety of texts also provides children with experience of storylines and sentence structures that add to their capability as writers. We can let children just enjoy the story and sentences, but we can also examine these for better understanding of the writer's craft. Implicit and explicit approaches work.

An important component of language comprehension is sentence structure. Teaching sentence structure can be done explicitly as well as immersing in texts where authors have used carefully crafted sentences. Sentence variety is a powerful tool for improving writing. The basis of being able to produce sentence variety is understanding sentence structure. Once again, it is important that teachers have knowledge of sentence structure to teach it well (Walls & Braid, 2023).

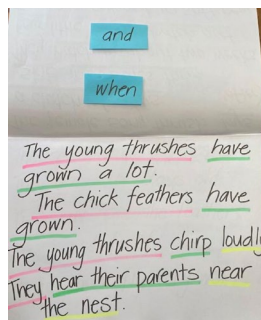


Figure 6. Using a text for sentence parts and combining

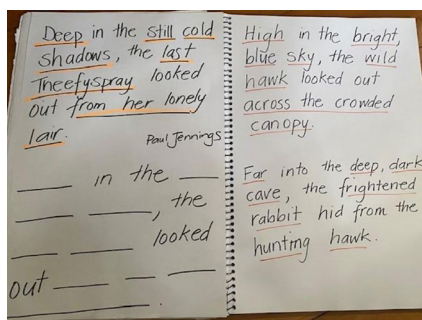


Figure 7. Riffing on an author's model

Utilising the magic of a picture book

One way to engage children with language comprehension is to read aloud using picturebooks. The way a picturebook is designed involves the words and the pictures dynamically interacting to tell a story neither medium could do alone. A picturebook goes beyond an illustrated story because the illustrations add layers of meaning by using techniques such as colour, symbol, and scale. I have used carefully selected picturebooks with students from Year 1 to Year 10.

A good picturebook engages children. During the reading of the book, children show high levels of engagement; we see them leaning forward as they sit on the mat to listen and view. If we also explain to them to look out for the techniques the artist has used (Braid, 2008) and how these connect with the words, we can set up even higher levels of engagement and understanding. By guiding children in what to look out for, I find the discussion is dynamic, with children very keen to say what they had noticed and share their interpretations.

An example of a picturebook that allows discussion and thinking is Bob Graham's (1992) *Rose meets Mr Wintergarten*. We learn about the characters as much through colour and symbol as we do through the words. Mr Wintergarten's house is large, dark, and surrounded by barbed wire fencing and cactus. Rose and her family are depicted with bright colours, birds, and flowers. Children enjoy noticing symbols in the pictures and matching with them what the words say. They wonder if Mr Wintergarten was just lonely and if the stories the children

told were just made up. They infer he lived alone and that he was grumpy. They recall characters he reminds them of. They are surprised by the colour of the curtains in his house once Mr Wintergarten let the light in, and they think he might now change. We discuss where the character started to change, which illustration best shows this. They enjoy spotting differences in the final endpaper.

Another example of a well-crafted picturebook is *Luke's Way of Looking* by Nadia Wheatley and Matt Ottley (2012). The book provides opportunities to discuss the difficulties the main character has in school. The words allow the pictures space to tell some of the story. The symbolism of birds, feathers, shadows can be identified and examined for what they bring to the story. The artist carefully contrasts monochrome, changing to full colour, and the use of size and scale as the shadow of the teacher changes from that of a large ogre to a small angel's wings. This book can easily be used with older primary students (Braid & Finch, 2015).

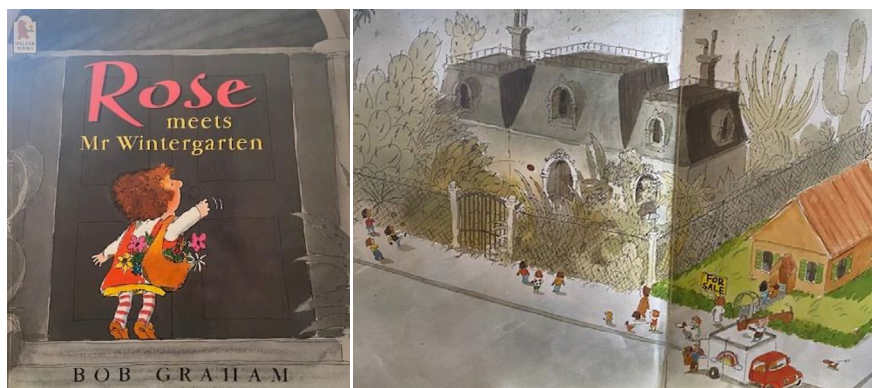


Figure 8. Cover and front endpaper from *Rose meets Mr Wintergarten*

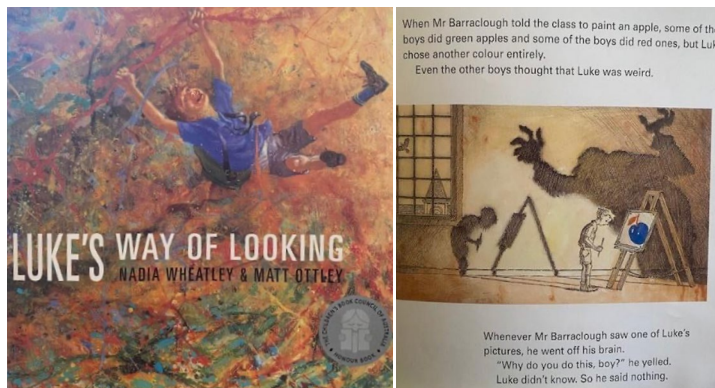


Figure 9. Cover and inside page of *Luke's Way of Looking*

The picturebook examples show that good literacy teaching involves using some structure and explicit teaching and some more flexibility and implicit opportunities. Teachers will also share novels as read aloud, share poetry as read together, use levelled texts and school journals as guided or shared reading opportunities and use good non-fiction texts. Teacher knowledge of different types of literature to share and how to share it is very important. Just as knowing more about the writing system is important in teaching the printed code, so knowledge about children's literature is important to developing discussions with depth and understanding.

What is the way forward?

I have described a balance of resources and a balance of approaches. I have described the structured and the flexible, the explicit and the implicit. The models for reading and writing show components are needed in a dynamic balance. Advice from Castles et al (2018) is that the notion of *balanced instruction* could be helpful. This is not

the same as *balanced literacy* which connects to three-cueing and learning to read by reading. I have chosen not to elaborate on three-cueing here, but I have written about that elsewhere (Braid, 2022). Balanced instruction or a balancing of instruction means finding the right method and resources at the right time for the right learners. It is not a bit of this and that and it is not using a balance of information sources or cues to work out a word.

I don't imagine we will be able to use the word balanced to describe best practice in literacy teaching, but the difficulty that labels can produce does serve as a warning that any term can be used in multiple ways and be misunderstood. We need to be aware of this difficulty with terminology and to understand more deeply than a label what we do and why we do it. Labels can be helpful, but they can also be misleading. Our teaching needs to be beyond a label.

Teaching is the combination of what we need to teach and how we need to teach it. We have learned much about the what from scientific studies of

reading. But reading science does not come with educational prescriptions attached; science is one kind of thing and educational practice another (Seidenberg et al., 2020). There is no precise match from research studies and instruction so we must work carefully and thoughtfully to create the best learning opportunities. The magic of teaching is knowing the content of what we must teach (and all the knowledge that goes with that) and knowing the pedagogy or teaching approaches. As teachers we need a clear knowledge of the 'what' we teach and the 'how' we teach. The craft and creativity of teaching is to bring this knowledge

together in a way that works for the learners in front of us.

At this stage of my career, I am thrilled to have had the opportunity to build my knowledge in the essence of language and about the code of print. I am glad I know about explicit and planned teaching as well as providing implicit and in the moment opportunities. I aim as an educator to keep on being aware, keep noticing, be open but also thinking and critiquing. We do need change. We also need reflective practice. The way forward is to use all that we have and that is a positive place to be.

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Shifting from Surviving to Thriving: Unlocking keys to teacher wellbeing using a nervous system lens

Keynote Presentation

By **Andrea Greer**,
*Trauma Responsive Trainer &
Consultant, Nurturing Relationships*

In today's fast-paced world, teachers often find themselves overwhelmed and exhausted, struggling to keep up with the demands of their profession. The phrases "I am so exhausted", "I am counting down to the holidays!", "I'm so run down", and "I have nothing left in my tank!" are common expressions heard from teachers worldwide. These statements highlight the challenges that educators face daily and the urgent need to support their wellbeing.

According to a 2020 Hauora Health and Wellbeing survey for teachers and principals, emotional and mental exhaustion, managing complex behaviours in the classroom, heavy workloads, and lack of resourcing are the major sources of work-related stress (Riley et al., 2021). There has never been a more crucial time to prioritise the wellbeing of our teachers.

When I was invited to speak at the 2023 Literacy Conference in Southland, it was on my heart to bring hope and encouragement to the teachers listening to my keynote presentation. Using the acronym of S.H.I.F.T. we unpacked the neuroscience behind what supports our well-being (Greer, 2023). Even though we might be experiencing exhaustion,

burnout and fatigue we can nourish our nervous system back to a state of thriving, not just surviving. I will now outline how we explored in my presentation, the acronym S.H.I.F.T. and how we can support our nervous system to thrive and flourish.

S – States of the nervous system

In order to prioritise our wellbeing, it is essential to have an awareness of our own nervous system states. This involves using a lens of curiosity to explore the current state of our nervous system and asking ourselves "What does my nervous system need in this moment?" (Dion, 2022). By likening it to the ebb and flow of waves in the ocean, we gain insight into the dynamic nature of our nervous system's states (Collie and Greer, 2023). Dr. Stephen Porges' research identifies three primary states of the nervous system, which are influenced by our perception of safety or threat (Porges, 2017).

The first state referred to is the ventral vagal pathway. This state can be likened to the gentle, calm, and relaxed waves on a beach. When the ventral vagal pathway is activated in our nervous system, it allows us to engage socially, feel a sense of safety, and puts our nervous system in a "rest and digest" mode (Cherland, 2012).

The sympathetic pathway, also associated with the fight-or-flight response, is a crucial component of the nervous system. Initiated by perceived threats or challenges, this pathway originates in the spinal cord and involves nerve clusters throughout the body. It triggers a mobilisation response, characterised by increased heart rate, elevated blood pressure, muscle tension, sweating, shallow breathing, and blood redistribution to extremities (McCorry, 2007). This state can be likened to the high energy, big, fast moving waves on a beach. Consequently, behaviours such as fidgeting, rapid movement, impulsivity, reactivity, aggression, feeling rushed, and stress are often observed as behaviours in this state.

The third state of the autonomic nervous system is known as the dorsal vagal response, which is a part of the parasympathetic branch. This state occurs when the body's "brakes" in the nervous system have been applied for an extended period, leading to a shutdown and collapse response (Porges, 2017). Physiologically, during this state, blood flows into the gut, and the body focuses on conservation and preservation. Muscles become limp, energy levels decrease, the face may appear pale, and individuals may experience feelings of tiredness, flatness, numbness, and disconnection from themselves and others. This state can be likened to a beach at low tide, there is little to no movement, the energy is low, there is little life flow.

Burnout can be seen as a manifestation of the dorsal vagal shutdown response, characterised by a gradual depletion of mental, emotional, and physical resources. When there is a greater

demand for resources than what is available, it leads to fatigue. If this imbalance persists over time, fatigue can become chronic and eventually result in burnout (Edú-Valsania et al, 2022).

H – Highway

The vagus nerve, also known as the 10th cranial nerve, is a significant neural pathway that originates from the brainstem and extends to various organs throughout the body (Habib, 2019). Its Latin name, "vagus," signifies its widespread and "wandering" nature. The nerve provides innervation (nerve supply) to numerous body parts, including the neck, thorax, chest, heart, lungs, abdomen, stomach, small intestine, large intestine, liver, pancreas, spleen, kidney, and gallbladder. As a bidirectional highway, the vagus nerve facilitates an ongoing dialogue between the gut and the brain through the gut-brain axis. This connection primarily involves 80% of information flowing from the gut to the brain and 20% of messages travelling from the brain to the gut. The understanding of the gut-brain connection can support us in adopting a holistic approach that integrates the body and mind for overall wellbeing. Given that 80% of the information received by the brain originates from the gut, it highlights the significance of nurturing our bodies and prioritising gut health.

I – Immune system

Persistent exposure to stress can lead to an allostatic load; an accumulation of physiological changes in the body, resulting in an increased risk of inflammation (Ravi et al, 2021). When

consistently experiencing stress, it negatively impacts our immune system's ability to function at its best, leading to increased susceptibility to illnesses.

Research indicates that a significant portion of our immune cells, ranging from 70 to 80%, are situated in our gut (Wiertsema et al, 2021). This knowledge can encourage us to adopt a holistic approach to maintaining our well-being by prioritising the health of our gut.

Serotonin, a key neurotransmitter known for its impact on mood regulation, sleep patterns, healing processes, and digestion, is primarily synthesised in the gut. Reports suggest that 90 to 95% of serotonin production occurs in the gastrointestinal tract (Terry & Margolis, 2017). This emphasises the intricate connection between gut health and emotional well-being. There are several practical ways to start looking after our gut health. One approach is to increase fibre intake, as fibre plays a crucial role in supporting digestive health. Foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes are excellent sources of dietary fibre. Additionally, incorporating probiotic-rich foods into the diet can be beneficial. Probiotics are live bacteria and yeasts that are good for digestive health. Examples of probiotic-rich foods include yogurt and fermented foods.

Another important aspect of gut health is consuming prebiotic foods. Prebiotics are source of food for your gut's healthy bacteria (Collins, 2020). Foods such as legumes (chickpeas, lentils, and kidney beans), whole grains (barley, rice, quinoa), onion, garlic, and asparagus are rich sources of prebiotics. Furthermore, including just ripe

bananas in the diet can also contribute to improving gut health.

It's essential to be mindful of alcohol consumption and to drink alcohol wisely, as excessive alcohol intake can have a negative impact on gut health. Staying adequately hydrated by drinking enough water is also crucial for maintaining good digestive function.

In addition to incorporating beneficial foods into the diet, it's important to reduce the consumption of processed foods. Processed foods often contain high levels of unhealthy fats, sugars, and additives that can disrupt the balance of gut bacteria.

Lastly, paying attention to how different foods make you feel is an important aspect of maintaining gut health. Some individuals may have sensitivities or intolerances to certain foods, and being aware of these reactions can help in making informed dietary choices that support overall gut health.

F – Flowing nervous system

It is a common belief that humans should always be in a state of calm, but in reality, our bodies are designed to adapt to stress and challenges to ensure survival. Just as the tides in the ocean rise and fall, we aim to support our nervous system in becoming adaptable and resilient when facing stress and challenges; resulting in a flowing nervous system.

The vagus nerve, which plays a crucial role in regulating various bodily functions, is a key component in supporting us to develop a flowing nervous system. Vagal tone refers to

the strength and efficiency of the vagus nerve. When someone's vagal tone is high, it indicates that the ability to self-soothe and adapt to stress is strong (Psychology Today New Zealand, n.d).

Vagal tone can be assessed by measuring heart rate variability, which is the variation in time intervals between heartbeats. This variability reflects the body's ability to adapt and respond to different situations. A higher heart rate variability indicates a better capacity to handle stress and environmental changes by effectively transitioning between the parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous systems. This flexibility in the nervous system is linked to resilience and the ability to cope with trauma and stress.

T – Thriving Strategies to strengthen vagal tone

There are practical and simple ways that we can strengthen our vagal tone, to support a flowing nervous system:

- Engaging in activities that involve vocalisation eg: singing, humming, repetitive prayer
- Deep diaphragmatic breathing
- Exercise
- Laughing
- Cold water stimulation eg: Drinking cold water, splashing cold water on face, cold showers.
- Gargling
- Massage

The vagus nerve is the thriving nerve, not surviving nerve. When we activate the vagus nerve, we shift our internal states from stress to rest. When we

activate our vagus nerve repeatedly and consistently, we strengthen our vagal pathway. This increases our vagal tone, supporting our nervous system to become more resilient.

Conclusion

During the COVID-19 pandemic, I embraced a self-care strategy called “drain and dump,” where I would deplete all my energy and resources during the week and then try my best to replenish them with self-care activities on the weekends. However, this approach eventually led to burnout, bodily inflammation, and accumulated stress. After reflecting and learning personally from this experience, I realised that a more sustainable and effective self-care routine involves consistent and gradual practices focused on “intentional regulation.” This approach includes regularly checking in with my nervous system throughout the day and asking myself what it needs at that moment (Dion, 2022) . It also entails intentionally slowing down, allowing myself to take breaks, being mindful while eating and drinking, and connecting with my body. When we begin to implement these simple practices into our daily lives, we are befriending our nervous system (Dana, 2021). By embracing this approach to self-care, I have been able to gradually shift my nervous system from a state of surviving to thriving. I encourage you to also explore this self-care approach, which can help unlock the keys to your teacher wellbeing. Using the S.H.I.F.T. approach, I hope you can support your nervous system to thrive instead of survive.

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The Importance of Responding to Student Voice: What do our kids think about writing and writing instruction?

Workshop Presentation

By **Dr Murray Gadd**,
Independent Consultant

Many researchers (Charteris & Thomas, 2017; Cook-Salter, 2006; Keddie, 2015; Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012) have pointed to the importance of giving students a voice in ‘what and how they learn at school’ as a means of engaging them more in the learning process. For example, Cook-Sather (2006) states “that young people have unique perspectives on learning, teaching and schooling; that their insights warrant not only the attention but also the responses of adults; and that they should be afforded opportunities to actively shape their education” (p. 359).

Context

As part of a two-year inquiry we were undertaking with five diverse primary/intermediate schools across Aotearoa/New Zealand on ways of generating positive outcomes by Year 5-8 priority learners in writing, Professor Judy Parr and I (as principal investigators of the inquiry) decided to survey what students thought about writing. In particular, we wanted to work with a group of key investigators from the participating schools (James Robertson; Liam Carran; Zeba Ali; Linda Gendall; Kate Watson) and learn what students thought about themselves as writers and about the writing instruction they receive. As investigators, we all believed in the power of eliciting and attending to student voice. Note that the inquiry was a Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) funded by NZCER.

Reflections by Kate Pyne,
Teacher, Hutt Central School

Kate Pyne attended Murray's workshop and wrote these reflections to take back to her class and school.

This research gets to the core of student voice. Rather than asking students what they want to write about and expect that to elicit engagement, we are now starting to delve into writing motivations and beliefs as a writer.

The students we were surveying (n=449) were roughly representative of the New Zealand Year 5-8 student body as a whole. Coming from schools in both high and low socio-economic areas, they represented diverse ethnic backgrounds (NZE 34.1%; Māori 18.5%; Pasifika 16.3%; other, mainly of Indian descent, 31.1%). Forty six per cent stated that they could speak a language other than English with reasonable fluency. Languages commonly mentioned were Māori, Hindi, Tongan, Samoan and Mandarin. Note, however, that considerably more students in the group were from Year 7-8 classrooms (75.5%) than Year 5-6 classrooms (24.5%). Also note that a slight majority of students (54.1%) were female; 45.9% were male.

The Survey Process

We began by developing a written survey of mainly closed questions around three categories of questions: attitudes to writing (*How much do you like/dislike....? If you dislike writing, why?*); beliefs about students' self-efficacy as writers (*How good do you think you are....? What part of the writing process do you find easiest/hardest?*); and teachers use of instructional practices (*What do teachers do that makes writing easier for you?*) There is a full copy of the survey in Gadd (2024) pp. 178-179. Almost all questions required just a numerical rating from students using a 4-point Likert scale.

We then placed the survey into a SurveyMonkey template, explained it to students and required them to complete it (within a two-week period) midway through and at the end of each year. This was to see if their attitudes changed throughout the inquiry. They were to complete it on-line and independently, though some struggling readers and writers were supported by the teacher or their peers in this. We asked students to be as honest as possible in their responses.

Over the last few decades, we have focused on reading engagement, how to get our students to think of themselves as 'readers', but the question for writing has stayed the same, how do we improve student outcomes in writing? Murray's research moves away from that question. He is now asking, "How do we engage students in writing, in a way that means they see themselves as writers?"

We analysed each completed survey numerically (but had to code and categorise the *why do you dislike writing?* question). We then calculated the mean response for each question across the four time points to develop a comprehensive portrait of Year 5-8 student attitudes and beliefs about writing.

Some Results

Our results included some that supported what we expected to find out, but also several that surprised us greatly. The following is a summary of some of the key results, but for a full discussion of the results, refer to Gadd et al, 2019.

‘How much do you like writing at school?’

We were pleased that a slight majority of *all* students (59.2%) professed to like writing at school ‘heaps’ or ‘quite a lot’. Furthermore, we were pleased that very few (5.5%) professed to like writing ‘not at all’. In addition, it did not surprise us that considerably more girls (68.8%) than boys (49.6%) professed to like writing at school ‘heaps’ or ‘quite a lot’. This indeed reinforced our thinking that we have a lot more work to do to engage our boys more in writing.

We were, however, surprised that there were not strong links between students professing to like writing at school ‘heaps’ or ‘quite a lot’ and students achieving well as writers at school. For example, almost one-third of all students who achieved ‘at’ or ‘above’ national expectations (31.4%) stated that they actually liked writing at school only ‘a little’ or ‘not at all’. This suggested to us that students do not necessarily have to like writing in order to become good writers, though it probably helps.

It is great to see that nearly 60% of students like writing. But what about the other 40%. Those students are the real targets. ‘Why do they not like writing?’ would be the next layer of questioning for a teacher or school to investigate.

Surprising that student outcomes are not related to a like or dislike of writing and this really brings to the fore the question we need to be asking in our classrooms, are students engaged, or compliant? If our ‘good’ writers are compliant, how can we engage them? If our struggling writers are ‘engaged’, how can we leverage this to improve their writing skills? And who are the students who are our struggling, disengaged writers? Do we know who falls into each of these categories?

‘How much do you like writing away from school?’

We were surprised, and somewhat disappointed, that relatively few students (38.8% of *all* students and only 26.9% of boys) professed to like writing away from school ‘heaps’ or ‘quite a lot’. This is considerably fewer than those who professed to like writing at school ‘heaps’ or ‘quite a lot’ (59.2%). This made us wonder, *If students don’t particularly like writing away from school/in their own time, can we really say that they ‘like writing’ and ‘want to write’?* This reinforced our thinking that there is considerably more work to do to convince older primary-age students that writing is a purposeful and important activity that can be fun.

‘How much do you like reading other people’s writing and having your own writing read by others?’

We were pleased that most students – particularly girls – liked reading other people’s writing ‘heaps’ or ‘quite a lot’ (66.1%) with very few (4.3%) professing to not like reading others’ writing at all. Reading others’ writing gives them ideas for their own writing. It was interesting to note, however, that although many students like to read other students’ writing, far fewer (40.9%) liked having their writing read by others. This was particularly evident amongst girls with only 34% professing to like having the writing read by others. As one Year 8 girl commented, *I like writing but dislike people reading my writing without permission.*

‘How much do you like writing fiction or creative texts and non-fiction or informational texts?’

Responses to this question probably surprised us more than any other set of responses. Although 71% of *all* students liked writing fiction or

I wonder if the purpose for writing was at the forefront of writing instruction, if we would see a difference in children engaging in writing at home. If writing to entertain or reflect for example were highlighted, would students pick up their pen at home to journal about their day, or write an entertaining short story to read at the dinner table. If writing to share learning or knowledge was prioritised, would children come home and write down something they learnt at school to share with their family?

creative texts ‘heaps’ or ‘quite a lot’, only 33.5% felt the same about writing non-fiction or informational texts. We had read that “many male students.... prefer to read and write factual texts on topics such as sport, science and history” (Walker & Bayetto, 2021, p. 14) but our results did not support this belief. Whereas 38.1% of girls professed to like writing non-fiction or informational texts ‘heaps’ or ‘quite a lot’, only 28.9% of boys did. Follow-up conversations with some of these boys, however, indicated that it was especially *recounts, informational reports and speeches* that they disliked writing and this was often because they felt that they had been taught *how to write them* over and over again. Teachers had put too much of an emphasis on genre rather than topic.

‘How good do you think you are at writing?’

We were pleased that a slight majority of *all* students (61.9%) believed that they were ‘very good’ or ‘quite good’ at writing. As we had anticipated, slightly more girls (65.1%) than boys (57.2%) felt this. Very few students of either gender (6.4%) seemed to believe that they were indeed ‘not good’ at writing.

But we were surprised that there were not strong links between students believing that they were ‘very good’ or ‘quite good’ at writing and achieving well as writers at school, just as we had been surprised that there were not strong links between students liking writing and achieving well as writers. Of those who stated that they were only ‘a little bit good’ or ‘not good’ at writing, 42.9% in fact achieved ‘at’ or ‘above’ national expectations. This suggested

to us that high self-efficacy is maybe a desirable but not an essential trait for some students to become proficient writers.

‘What do teachers do that makes writing easier for you?’

Having given students a list of teaching strategies that many teachers of writing use (*select a good topic for you to write about; make sure the purpose/reason for writing is clear to you; give you some choice in what and how you write; show you how to plan or write; show you a good model of what is expected; work with you as part of a small group; let you know how you are going with your writing*), we were interested that students nominated three strategies clearly above all others (*select a good topic for you to write about; give you some choice in what and how you write; let you know how you are going with your writing*) and that they nominated *working with you as a small group* near the bottom of the list.

This reinforced our belief that, above all else, *topic and task propel student engagement in writing*, as well as the importance of *giving students some choice in what they write about and how they write*. A deeper investigation into many students’ apparent dislike of working with the teacher in small groups linked to a perception that many seemed to hold that *only the dumb kids work with the teacher*. This reinforced our belief in ensuring that grouping for writing instruction is needs or social-based rather than ability-based. This maybe even means inviting rather than directing students to attend small group sessions.

Conclusion

These are but some of the key results that emerged from the survey that we undertook. Now that we have developed a survey process and collected an initial round of results on student attitudes and beliefs about writing, it will be interesting to see how teachers maybe use the process and collect their own data to not only listen to their students' voices but maybe make comparisons with the results that we have gathered. As we concluded in our discussion (Gadd et al., 2019), "Teachers not only need to listen closely to their students' opinions but be open to altering their practice according to what they hear" (p. 233).

This makes us question not only how we use student voice in our classrooms but also at a school wide level. Do we ask students what they think we could do better to make learning more engaging? Could this be a part of the process when developing school wide action plans?

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I've Got a Song to Sing... but first I have to write it!

Workshop Presentation

By **Andrea Robertson**,
*Senior Professional Practice Fellow,
Otago University College of Education*

I've had 27 years of experience as a primary teacher and love teaching music, technology and literacy. I'm also passionate about teacher wellbeing. At the NZLA conference in 2023, I presented a workshop on songwriting where I provided simple and effective approaches to teaching songwriting with your ākonga. I discussed why educators should include songwriting in their literacy programme and explored connections in literacy and songwriting. Finally, I outlined some ideas and activities to support teaching songwriting that all educators can use in their class.

No previous experience in songwriting is necessary and no ability in instrument playing is required to include songwriting in your music or literacy programme. Paquette & Rieg (2008) suggest that through listening to music and having opportunities to create their own musical compositions, children are able to develop important skills, such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Alongside supporting literacy skills, songwriting allows our ākonga a voice and an audience, enabling them to share their creativity, opinions, hopes and dreams through song.

Why teach songwriting?

For many young people the words song and music are synonymous. Songs are the soundtrack to their lives (Kratus, 2016). Research on music listening habits in a 2009 Harris poll, showed that 8-10 year olds listen to about one hour of music daily and 13-15 years olds listen to about three hours of music every day (Harris, 2009, as cited in Kratus, 2016). I would argue that in 2024, our ākonga are viewing and listening to even more music. This is a largely untapped area of literacy for educators to use. How often in a week do you include listening to music, viewing music videos, reading lyrics etc in your literacy or music programme? By exploring songwriting and music in our classrooms we are connecting with our students' interests and lives.

There are many ways that teachers can include songwriting in their class. From simple rhymes and raps that fit well with a poetry focus, through to creating fully original songs with digital music to accompany. The ākonga in my class have been able to create, share and perform their songs. Songwriting provides a real life context for writing. Furthermore, songwriting offers a structure for writing, fosters creativity, allows for storytelling and it is fun. An example of this is writing parody songs – taking a known tune and writing on a topic of interest, with humour, for students. Paquette & Rieg (2008)

explain: “Listening to song parodies is an excellent way to demonstrate how others have taken older songs and have made them originals. After teacher modelling, students will be prepared to write and to sing their unique song parodies” (p. 230).

Importantly, songwriting allows ākonga to express their ideas, emotions, opinions and more. Gallo & Kuchenbrod (2022) advocate that primary-aged children should be encouraged to write songs to express their personal identities, to convey a position or emotion and even as a form of activism. Teaching songwriting in your class will allow children the opportunity to collaborate and explore their ideas. It is creative and combines well with a poetry focus in your literacy programme. Dweck (2023) states that there are many positive outcomes for ākonga engaging in songwriting, such as developing self-esteem and gaining a stronger sense of identity.

Connections in literacy and songwriting

Including songwriting in your literacy programme provides a rich context, purpose, and meaningful models of literacy. Paquette & Rieg (2008) suggest that songs can be used to teach a variety of important literacy and language skills, for example, sentence patterns, vocabulary, pronunciation, rhythm, and parts of speech. I have found that this links well to working with junior students when they are learning about letters and sounds. Focusing on rhyme, syllables and reading aloud with pace and rhythm, can all be modelled and practised through exploring songs.

To get started with songwriting I always immerse ākonga in the world of music and songs. What better way to learn about songs than through singing, playing, listening and moving. Kaschub & Smith (2009) describe children from early childhood through to the age of 7 or 8, naturally beginning to add their own music to their play by composing in sounds. Therefore it is important that we as educators foster and develop this natural skill in creating songs at a young age. Including songs and poems in the weekly reading programmes exposes ākonga to this writing genre. Selecting books that are rhymes or songs, allows for further exploration of rhythm and rhyme, sentence structure and flow. Examples include, Peter Millett and Shaun Yeo's *A Kiwi went to Sea Sea Sea*, *The Wonky Donkey* by Craig Smith, or Sharon Holt's waiata based picture books. Junior teachers have access to a world of picture books that are rich in rhyme and these can easily be turned into songs.

Books can also be used as a motivation for music – the theme – topic – characters or illustrations can all be used as prompts for songwriting. Deroo & Watson (2020) suggest that building on topics that are meaningful to our young people and including topics that are not often written about in school, is important. Children can be encouraged to write a song as a response to a novel, poem or picture book that they have read.

The website *Songs for Teaching* <https://www.songsforteaching.com/index.html> has links to hundreds of songs and lyrics on topics that can be used in class. I also use the latest chart hits (clean lyrics and appropriate themes)

and classic songs as reading material in my guided reading programme. This really hooks in students and they especially enjoy getting to suggest the songs that they would like to explore. In discussion we focus on critical literacy, use of semiotic systems, visual literacy, poetic devices and other literacy learning topics. Once a month in my shared reading programme I include a song as the shared reading text. This allows us to unpack the structure of the song, focus on the poetic language used and the message and meaning of the song. Websites like *The Literacy Shed* (<https://www.literacyshed.com/the-music-video-shed.html>) with the *Music Video Shed* includes prompts that can be used for oral language discussion and writing motivation. *2 Stars and A Wish* (<https://www.2starsandawish.com/songs-home>) is a great website for sourcing songs and poems. It has discussion questions and copies of the lyrics. However, you will have to source the video on YouTube yourself as the links on this website don't work in New Zealand.

Ideas and activities for teaching songwriting

The following activities are ones that I use every year in my classroom to teach songwriting. I usually teach songwriting in term four following on from a poetry focus in term three. The children finish the songwriting unit by creating their own songs and these can be recorded and shared with whānau as a special end of year gift/celebration. We also have fun creating and filming music videos to go with the songs. Here are [links](#) to supporting videos and digital tools from the conference presentation that you can use with your students.

Adapting a known poem or rhyme

Spend a couple of lessons exploring and adapting a known rhyme. It allows ākonga to focus on adding in the beat or changing the rhythm and they don't have to worry about the lyrics at this stage. In the first lesson I use the nursery rhyme *Humpty Dumpty* as a whole class model (even with Year 6 and above). We read through the lyrics, discuss the meaning of the rhyme and explore body percussion, beat and rhythm that we can add to it. This YouTube clip from *Gracie's Corner* (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQ2FzqIvWSE7ysvL1sLWQ5Q>) provides a rap example.

In the second lesson students are tasked with selecting their own nursery rhyme and turning it into a rap or chant. These two YouTube clips have entertaining examples of this activity. *Good Mythical Morning* (2018) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ioVAbpKCDxI&t=1s> and *Black Media Presents* (2023) <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/U7WEvd4-nB8>. In subsequent lessons they can also change the tune completely. We also move onto using poems instead of nursery rhymes. Incredibox <https://www.incredibox.com> a beatboxing app can be used to create a simple beat to accompany the rap or rhyme.

Allow for lots of exploration. I get the children to work in groups of 4-5 giving a timeframe e.g. 20 minutes is plenty of time, as I don't want them to overthink this and it doesn't have to be a polished performance. I also encourage performing the adapted songs and giving each other feedback. I find that

the students get lots of ideas off each other by sharing this way. Performance doesn't mean having to stand up at the front of the class, rather it can be sitting in a circle or in the space in the room where each group has been workshoping their piece.

Using a known tune

We start with a whole class modelled lesson with shared writing for the lyrics. I use the tune of *Row Row Row Your Boat*. Decide on a theme e.g. friendship, an emotion, season. Brainstorm ideas and record these. Count through the syllables in each line – clap these out and then record them on the board. Highlight the rhyme and brainstorm rhyming words you will use. There are a range of rhyme generators online that can help with this, such as *RhymeZone* (<https://www.rhymezone.com/>) and *Rhymer* (<https://rhymer.com/>) Then as a class write the new lyrics to match the syllables. In the next lesson ākonga move into groups and using *Row Row Row Your Boat* they pick a theme and write their own lyrics. We share these with the class. In the next session each group can pick their own known tune to write lyrics to. With older students (year 3 and 4 upwards) we look at parody songs and writing with humour. Ylvis's *What does the Fox Say?* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LyonKcbE6OY>) and *Music Parody Fun* (<https://www.youtube.com/@musicparodyfun>) are a good starting point. There are a lot of song parodies online and this is a genre that engages students and can be a great 'hook' into songwriting.

Singing a song in a different style or to the tune of another song

This can be a lot of creative fun. This integrates well into learning about different styles of music, music across the eras and with independent research into bands and artists. In groups the children then pick a song and sing it to a different tune or style of music.

Writing an original song

Once you have spent time exploring the previous activities in songwriting there will be a natural progression into starting to explore original tunes and lyrics. If children can play an instrument, encourage them to do this. I had success with my NE year 1 class playing just C and F chords on ukulele and writing their own songs! There are also some great digital tools that can support creating original tunes. *Chordchord* (<https://chordchord.com/>) and *Chrome Music Lab Song Maker* (<https://musiclab.chromeexperiments.com/Song-Maker/>) are fantastic digital tools to use.

In the first lesson I model the process and as a class we create a song together. Start with a chord progression that catches your ear – play it through and record it if playing on an instrument. I always start with a 2 chord combo. I play this on repeat and then start to hum to the tune. Next you can adlib in some words to see if it sounds ok. At this point, record it on an iPad or phone as it is easy to forget the tune. Decide on a theme or idea and brainstorm ideas for lyrics. Structure the first verse and chorus. In your song tell a story, share your opinions, share an emotion

etc. Then it is a matter of crafting and recrafting. Record it and listen back – what improvements can you make? Can you add in percussion? What happens if you slow it down, speed it up? Craft and re-craft again.

After this first lesson the children get into groups and have a go at writing their own songs. This can take one session, or you may extend this out to multiple sessions. If you have older students and access to Chromebooks or iPads then *Bandlab* (<https://www.bandlab.com/>) or *Garage Band* (<https://www.apple.com/nz/mac/garageband/>) are excellent digital tools to support songwriting. You can also use both these tools for recording the songs.

Teaching songwriting has provided so many highlights for me as a teacher. I've seen children who don't engage or enjoy writing suddenly hooked in and participating with their peers. I've learned about my ākonga in a different way than the typical writing programme allows. What makes them happy? What worries them? What are their dreams and aspirations? Songwriting allows ākonga to share these messages in a creative and safe way. I hope that some of the ideas suggested here might inspire you to delve into songwriting and bring the joy of music and writing into your classroom.

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Reading for Pleasure: What the research says and ways to engage your readers

Workshop Presentation

By **Bridget Schaumann**

*Kaihuawaere Pūmanawa ā-Motu
Facilitator National Capability,
Te Puna Matauranga o Aotearoa
National Library of New Zealand*
and **Maxine Ramsay**,
*Kaihuawaere Pūmanawa ā-Motu
Facilitator National Capability,
Te Puna Matauranga o Aotearoa
National Library of New Zealand*

In our workshop we explored:

recent research on the value of
reading for pleasure for rangatahi

ways to engage your reluctant
readers

key elements that contribute to a
reading community

Firstly, we looked at how workshop
participants identified as readers and
the idea that individual readers make
up a reading community.

Recent research on the value of reading for pleasure for rangatahi

We looked at two recent reports.

Stuart McNaughton's [*The Literacy
Landscape in Aotearoa New Zealand*](#)
(2020) describes the decline in reading
by 15-year-old NZ students over the
past two decades. [*Now I don't know
my ABC*](#) (Hood and Hughson, 2022)

is an extensive literature review that
helps us understand more fully where
Aotearoa New Zealand is at in terms
of literacy achievement, how we got
here, and what might be done to
turn the situation around. Reading
for pleasure is strongly correlated
with better reading comprehension,
mainly because reading for pleasure
allows students to gain access to a
broad array of vocabulary and other
knowledge.

These reports include explicit
recommendations for a whole school/
community approach to improving
literacy. Recommendations for the 11-
18 year old age group included:

- more time in reading and writing
across a range of text types in and
out of school
- the use of meaningful texts across
content areas
- a high literacy 'diet'
- extensive/intensive engagement
that is relevant for readers and
writers and reflects social and
cultural identity
- support for students to read widely
for pleasure

In research from many sources, it is
noted that reading for pleasure:

- boosts academic achievement, and
provides a foundation for critical,
digital and information literacy

- builds cognitive function and stamina when immersed in the flow of reading
- develops empathy and knowledge — of self, other worlds, culture, heritage, and ways of being and thinking
- empowers students to become active citizens
- improves and builds psychological wellbeing and healthy behaviours, and
- crucially for young people, can be relaxing and provide an escape



Deakin University's Current Research

Deakin University's Teen Reading in the Digital Era <https://teenreading.net/> research programme has been running since 2017. They have had responses from over 9,000 secondary school students in a 2022 survey. Findings from the research so far:

- Teens who read for pleasure prefer to read printed books rather than ebooks or audiobooks.
- Fiction is more popular than nonfiction.
- Fantasy, mystery and crime, and dystopian are the most popular fiction genres.
- Humour and graphic novels are more popular with younger teens aged 12-13.
- Romance and dystopian fiction are more popular with older teens aged 15+.
- Most popular nonfiction genres are history, biographies, autobiographies and memoirs, and technology and science.

Addressing the reluctant readers

There are many reasons why people don't read for pleasure, we explored some of the demotivating factors:

- lack of reading role models
- texts offered don't reflect them or their lives
- no books in their homes and no culture of reading
- pressure that causes them to feel anxious about reading
- no motivating factors to drive them to pick up a book
- pressure on their time to do other things

For reluctant readers we need to turn demotivation into motivation by:

- encouraging them to believe in their reading skills and their perception of themselves as readers
- helping them see reading as something that is valued
- helping them find content that links to their interests. Young people can discover reading because they are immersed in an interest and seek to find out more information about it
- providing reading role models. Role models can play an important part in motivating students to read
- creating opportunities for chat about books in a fun and engaging way which makes the reading a pleasurable activity rather than only an academic one



Figure 1. Reluctant readers' voice

Sometimes we want students to read but we don't draw them in by talking about how a story makes them feel, by selling the emotional aspects of the story. People who read know about the feeling of being immersed in a story – this is what draws us into stories again and again.

We discussed the pull on teenagers' time – sports, work, babysitting, childcare of siblings, social pressure, homework and so on. These demands on teens' time – in and out of school – mean reading isn't always a priority.

Engaging your reluctant readers (and keeping your keen readers keen)

Working with your non-readers, how do you...



Figure 2. Engaging reluctant readers

We took a moment to focus on some of the elements that can help to motivate your non-readers and also keep your keen readers reading!

Offer attractive, relevant and diverse books – It is good to be aware of excellent new books published every year as well as old favourites. Remember though that changes in attitudes and societal norms mean that some older books aren't as great to read anymore.

Give them time – teenagers are busy. Providing a little bit of space to get stuck into reading during the school day can be a great driver.

Make it irresistible – teenagers have lots of other choices for entertainment. Tie books to social activities, to other media, talk about books you love and communicate passionately how they have influenced your life.

Talk about reading – the current generation of adolescents is characterised by a social nature and subsequent craving for interactivity. Are there reading conversations across the school?

Great ideas to promote reading

- Reading is important in every subject. Showcase books in your classroom
- Have posters of what you are reading or a note on the whiteboard and keep it updated
- Talk to students about with they are reading
- Have assemblies with authors, poets, creatives, and speeches
- Get student leaders involved
- Show reading is important all the time

National Library [Engaging teens with reading](#) covers a range of strategies

Teachers Creating Readers

We shared our Teachers Creating Readers Framework and the booklet which is available on our website. The booklet discusses ways teachers can influence the reading culture in a school and community. School library staff are a treasure you can work alongside for ideas, book talks, reading events and much more – use their expertise and enthusiasm to support what you're already doing in the classroom.

In conclusion, reading communities grow over time with collaboration, conversation, and celebration! Don't forget to enjoy the wins along the way. Celebrate your success with students who suddenly 'get the bug' and start reading for the sheer joy of it.

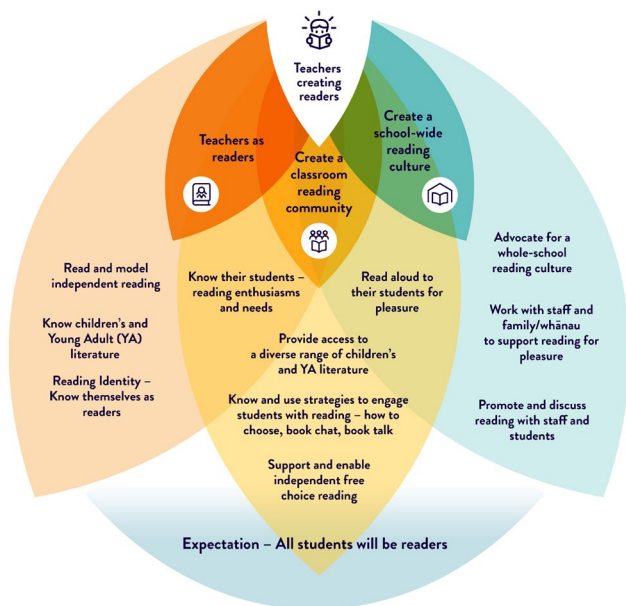


Figure 3. Teachers creating readers framework

National Library Webpages

National Library web pages – [Reading for pleasure a door to success](#)

National Library web page – [School staff as readers](#)

National Library – [Engaging teens with reading](#)

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Teachers as Readers

Workshop Presentation

By **Sue McDowall**,
Senior Researcher, NZCER

Do you remember a favourite book
from childhood? What stood out?
And why was it important?

Do you still enjoy books or other
kinds of stories?

What have you been reading lately?

Why do you read?

These are some of the questions I asked the participants in a workshop I ran at the 2023 NZLA conference in Invercargill. The workshop was based on a research project I did for the National Library Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa called *Teachers as Readers: Listening to, reading, and talking about stories—for pleasure* (McDowall, 2021) and on a subsequent article (McDowall, 2022). The impetus for the research was the steady decline in children's enjoyment of reading. This decline matters because reading for pleasure is associated with many positive outcomes. These include improved school achievement, wellbeing, social inclusion, and engagement in public, social, and economic life. Some positive outcomes are associated particularly with reading fiction, such as self-awareness, empathy, and perspective-taking. And, perhaps most importantly, reading for pleasure has value as an end itself.

We know that one important factor in becoming a reader is having a teacher who is a reader themselves. To find out *how* teachers who read can make a difference I designed a small exploratory study that involved talking with nine primary and intermediate teachers known to be passionate readers. The teachers came from a wide variety of schools in terms of decile, size, and type. And they taught across a range of class levels from Year 1 to Year 8. They had varied backgrounds, life experiences, career pathways, and reading tastes. Despite these differences, the teachers shared a similar orientation towards books and story.

In the workshop we discussed our own aspirations for our students as readers and considered those of the teachers in the research project. The research teachers wanted their students to enjoy reading, to see themselves as readers, to develop their sense of identity, to broaden their horizons, to have agency, and to tell their own stories. In short, the teachers wanted their students to experience the same benefits of reading that they themselves experienced.

To enable these experiences the teachers were *explicit* about what being a reader involves – what readers do, and how they talk, think, and behave. And the teachers also modelled what being a reader involves by bringing their reader selves into the classroom – responding to texts both intellectually and emotionally. The teachers fostered reading communities by sharing

books and providing time to listen to, read, and talk about books purely for pleasure. Through these experiences students had opportunities to learn the discourse of being a reader.

We concluded the workshop by discussing the alignment of the teacher aspirations and practices described above with the refreshed English learning area in *Te Mātaiaho* (Ministry of Education 2023), which describes how through the English learning area students,

“understand, enjoy, and celebrate the beauty and richness of stories (fiction and non-fiction) from Aotearoa New Zealand, from Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa, and from around the world” (Ministry of Education, 2023, p.2).

We also discussed the big idea, Stories are a source of joy and nourishment, which brings me back to where my workshop began – with the idea that reading for pleasure is a worthwhile outcome in itself.

“Enjoying the stories of others and crafting our own provide us with opportunities to experience different worlds through creativity, imagination, and interaction. These stories take many forms...and they cross boundaries in relation to mode and medium. Broadening and deepening the intellectual and aesthetic appreciation of story is a worthwhile outcome in itself” (Ministry of Education, 2023, p.4).

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My study at the centre of this presentation was part of Pūtoi Rito Communities of Readers funded by Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa (National Library) <https://natlib.govt.nz/about-us/collaborative-projects/communities-of-readers>

National Monitoring of Subject English

Workshop Presentation

By **Sue McDowall**,
Senior Researcher, NZCER

For many years now I have been interested in the question ‘What is English?’ By this question I mean, ‘What is the English learning area about? ‘What do teachers and students do in English classes? And ‘What is the purpose of English as a learning area?’

A good way of determining what is considered important in a learning area is examining how it is assessed, especially when the assessments are national or high stakes ones. So, the question ‘What is English?’ was at the heart of the workshop *National monitoring of the English learning area: Where have we come from and where are we going?* (McDowall, 2023) which I ran at the 2023 NZLA conference in Invercargill and based on an article of mine (McDowall, 2022).

This workshop explored the shifting focus of national monitoring in the English learning area, from the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) 1995-2010, through the National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA) 2012-2022, and on to the curriculum insights and progress study beginning in 2023.

Over this time, there has been a shift in focus from assessing literacy across the curriculum in a generic sense to assessing English as a learning

area with its own discipline specific literacies (Moje, 2008). For example, NEMP 1995-2010 focused on texts associated with a range of learning areas such as maths, social studies, and science. It also focussed on texts associated with everyday life, such as recipes, instructions, and signs. In contrast the most recent curriculum insights and progress assessment of English in 2023 focussed on fiction (stories, plays, poems, picture books, graphic novels, and short films); and creative non-fiction (essays, memoir, and biographies). This most recent monitoring also included assessment activities more closely aligned with the practices of English as a learning area and a discipline. The tasks focussed on the interpretation and critical analysis of texts, as well as on comprehension. There were more open-ended questions, and opportunities for oral as well as written responses. In addition, there was a small group dialogic discussion with a focus on collective meaning making around two texts.

It was interesting to look back as a group and reflect on the changing ways in which we have monitored English over the last 20 years or so. We discussed the need to be clear about what we mean by literacy and what we mean by English, what the literacies of the English learning area involve, and how they are both like, and different from those of other learning areas. And finally, we discussed the need for

every teacher to take responsibility for teaching the literacies of the learning areas they teach rather than relying on these being covered as part of English which has its own curriculum literacies for students to learn.

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Money Matters: Ways to teach financial literacy within your literacy programme

Workshop Presentation

By **Keren Copland**,
Teacher, Woodlands School

I am a primary school teacher at Woodlands Full Primary School located near Invercargill, Southland. I have included financial literacy into many aspects of my teaching and this decision was inspired by a class project that focused on the development and maintenance of a school worm farm. Over time, this worm farm has evolved into a small business, efficiently managed by my students each year. This report covers the content of my workshop presentation at the NZLA conference in Invercargill.

In this age of rapidly advancing technology and evolving economic landscapes, it is essential to equip our students with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate the complex world of financial literacy. However, shocking statistics reveal that 51% of high school students admit to having received little to no financial education during their time at school. Imagine the impact this knowledge gap can have on their futures. Many students emphasise the significance of learning about financial literacy within the school system, stating that they lack access to such information at home. They express a strong desire to stay informed about “up to date” financial concepts and express disappointment that the financial literacy education

they receive is often deemed irrelevant. In my workshop, I explained why students of all ages should acquire knowledge about financial literacy, and then elucidated on practical techniques, engaging resources and impactful lesson ideas that will help our students’ understanding and approach to money matters.

Fundamental Reasons and Approaches

Lifelong Skill and Choices and Opportunities

Teaching children about financial literacy is essential because it equips them with a valuable life skill. As they grow older, they will continue to encounter financial decisions and challenges, making it crucial for them to have strong foundations in managing money and making informed choices. Financial literacy empowers children to make informed choices and seize opportunities. Understanding concepts like budgeting, saving, and investing enables them to make wise financial decisions, pursue their goals, and have the freedom to choose the life they want.

Changing Economic World and The Impact of Social Media

The economy is constantly evolving, and children need to understand

the dynamics of this ever-changing economic landscape. By imparting financial literacy, children can grasp concepts such as inflation, interest rates, and entrepreneurship, enabling them to adapt and thrive in the future economy. Additionally, today's social media and peer pressure often promote a culture of consumerism and materialism. Teaching children about financial literacy helps them understand the impact of these influences, developing critical thinking skills to differentiate between needs and wants. They can develop a healthy mindset, avoiding unnecessary debt and excessive spending.

Money Mindset and Lack of Financial Literacy at Home

Habits and mindsets around money are often formed during childhood. By introducing financial literacy at an early age, children can develop positive money habits, such as regularly making thoughtful purchasing decisions and understanding the importance of financial responsibility. Furthermore, financial education cannot be assumed to occur solely at home. Unfortunately, not all children receive guidance on financial matters within their households. Therefore, it becomes important for schools to provide financial literacy education that ensures children have the opportunity to develop the necessary knowledge and skills to manage their finances effectively.

Integrating Financial Literacy into Classroom Literacy Programmes

The key to teaching financial literacy within a classroom literacy programme

is to view it as a context for learning, rather than a separate learning area. By integrating financial literacy into as many learning areas as possible, this approach helps students understand the practical application of financial concepts and allows them to develop essential financial skills while also fostering their literacy skills.

Teaching Financial Terminology within a Literacy Programme

Financial literacy can be a complex subject with its jargon and specific terms. A valuable starting point to facilitate learning in this area is to focus on building vocabulary. Here are some examples of how financial terminology can be effectively incorporated into your literacy programme.

Alphabet Words is one effective activity to engage children in financial literacy. The teacher can have them generate words or phrases related to the topic, please see Figure 1. This activity not only provides insights into children's prior knowledge but also informs future teaching strategies. By teaching words in a contextual manner rather than in isolation, this activity enhances children's vocabulary and comprehension. It can be implemented individually or as a whole class exercise.

Following the Alphabet Words activity, students can progress to sorting the generated words into groups. These categories can either be predetermined by the teacher or created by the students themselves. This task serves to reinforce connections between words and deepen students' understanding of financial concepts. It encourages critical thinking and comprehension skills development.

A	afford ATM appreciate account allowance	J	job	S	swap share save sale silver sell seller spend shop
B	bank bill budget borrow business bargain buy	K		T	tax trade teller
C	coin cash cheap change collection currency	L	lotto loot lend loss	U	unforeseen disaster
D	dollars donate discount donation debt	M	money market	V	value vault vision
E	expenses earn earnings	N	notes needs	W	wants wallet win work will-power
F	finance fortune fine	O	own overdue owe	X	
G	give gold generosity grow	P	price pay poor purse profit payment	Y	
H	help	Q	quantity quality	Z	
I	insurance income interest	R	register reward rich receive		

Figure 1. Alphabet Words Activity

Transactional Play in the Classroom Setting

The establishment of a shop within the classroom environment serves as a valuable platform for transactional play, wherein goods and services are exchanged, mirroring real-life scenarios. This immersive experience not only fosters children’s understanding of the world they inhabit but also enhances their proficiency in listening and speaking. To explore the rich potential of transactional play, educators can refer to “The Little Book of Role Play” authored by Sally Featherstone, which offers insightful examples and guidance, please see Figure 2.

Engaging in Meaningful Discussions

Regularly engaging in discussions centred around financial literacy empowers students to cultivate critical listening skills, analyse and evaluate ideas, and develop their own informed opinions. This practice not only fosters open-mindedness but also emphasises

the importance of respectful discourse, free from bias or preconceived notions. Thought-provoking conversation starters such as “What qualities contribute to someone’s financial acumen?” and “Do you believe that money equates to happiness? Why or why not?” can provide a platform for deepening understanding and fostering critical thinking skills.



Figure 2. Shop in my classroom

Utilising Picture Books for Meaningful Conversations

Picture books serve as an excellent medium to facilitate engaging conversations, especially when introducing financial concepts in a safe and supportive environment. Given the emotional associations often linked to money, picture books provide a valuable tool to explore and address these sensitive topics. Additionally, these books assist in expanding students' vocabulary and establishing connections between financial concepts. For a collection of picture books with a specific focus on financial literacy, please refer to Figure 3.



Figure 3. Books to help teach Financial Literacy

Incorporating Engaging Writing Tasks

The captivating illustrations featured in the picture books mentioned offer a wealth of opportunities for writing activities. These images can effectively serve as prompts for quick writing exercises or can inspire independent

writing, enabling students to apply their understanding of financial literacy in authentic real-life contexts.



Figure 4. Poem by my student in 2023

Aesop's Fables, widely known and beloved by children, can be creatively rewritten to centre around various financial literacy concepts. For instance, the classic tales of *The Hare and the Tortoise* or *The Ant and the Grasshopper* can be reimagined to emphasize the importance of spending wisely, saving diligently, or planning for retirement. By integrating financial messages into these narratives, students are more likely to retain the underlying concepts and ideas.

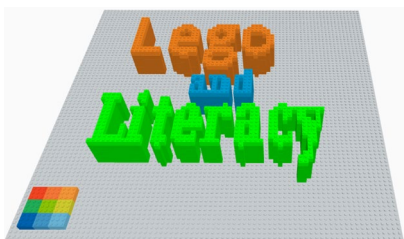
By incorporating these activities and strategies into our literacy programmes, we can inspire and empower students to become financially literate and confident individuals capable of making informed and responsible financial decisions throughout their lives. For more ideas and activities please visit Money Go Round (<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=10008691675421&paipv=o&eav=AfZZAfRoMzAtYZumobRX-zvOEjcvD5NWlupCASObth2bHXgY-DREakom4O6vjB3ZU97Cs& rdr>).

Lego and Literacy

Workshop Presentation

By **Anthony Breese**,
MoE Accredited PLD Facilitator
Museograph.nz
Associate of Cyclone

In my role with Cyclone and through Modern Teaching Aids, I have access to amazing technology such as LEGO to use in my professional learning and development work with teachers. LEGO is a great tool to engage and inspire students' literacy learning. Lego Spike is particularly good.



Why are some students reluctant writers? The Facts: Children not reaching the minimum reading benchmark has increased from 14% to 19%, while at the same time the proportion of students achieving at the highest levels in reading has decreased significantly.

Only 60% of 15-year-olds in New Zealand are achieving above the most basic level of reading, meaning 40% are struggling to read and write. So why are some of our students not valuing or struggling with writing?

All we do is write all day, our students should be amazing! We write in writing time, reading, math's, Inquiry/topic, health, music...

My thoughts are that there are so many reasons why our kids are struggling: purpose, authenticity, students finding it difficult to transfer the skills to other areas, lack of chances to be creative, community, parenting, and trauma. I don't always believe it's our education system.

I was a bad writer as a kid or, so I was told. My imagination would go wild with great adventure stories of pirates, heroes, and fantasy. Unfortunately, when I was at school, writing wasn't about imagination and storytelling – it was about capital letters and full stops.

As students get older, it becomes less relatable to their world! Young people are clever, they have created their own language...it's called texting. They can also play complicated games with problem solving, strategising, and communication.

How do we make writing more relevant?
 Make it authentic!

Here's a few of my thoughts. The main influence in a child's life is their parent or caregiver and a lot of our students don't see what their parents write. Even if they do an office job or are in an academic job, they will mostly see parents' type...or watch Netflix.

A couple of things to take away:

1. Not every child is going to be a professional writer!
2. Just because they struggle to write now, doesn't mean they always will!
3. Writing should be about quality not quantity.
4. Everything should be writing, not just writing time.
5. Students should know what they're working on. A rubric is a great tool that students should have control of.

So how do we make writing more authentic and interesting? Lego is loved by a lot of our students and can be used as a stimulus. It has also been used with autism or social related difficulties, such as students with anxiety. Lego also encourages problem-solving skills, collaboration and developing imagination.

The Lego I often take around schools and show to teachers is the Lego Spike Kits. However, any Lego will do. What I like about the Lego Spike is that it comes with an app that connects via Bluetooth that incorporates robotics and coding and can be relative to what you're doing in the classroom. They are not cheap, but when you work with a classroom, they are one of the best robotics gear I've seen. I do not have shares in Lego.

The first task I do with students is to get them to build me a chicken. I don't use any images; I just give them the Lego and let them go. It's amazing what they come back with. One student I taught built me a transforming chicken that could change from a human into a chicken. After, I get the children to write a blurb to sell their chicken...this is the writing task. For example:

This is the new Grief-Stricken Chicken! Let this chicken take your grief away. With its colourful plumage, strong sharp beak, and a red, fleshy comb on top of its head, this chicken is the one for you!

By having the Lego chicken in front of them, the students are able to describe in detail what their chicken looks like.

Secondly, I have my student complete one of the unit plans that comes with the Lego. I'll use the Essential kits such as the Ferris Wheel as an example. During the lesson, the students follow the instructions carefully and build. During it I will stop them and get them to write. They take notes about what it looks like, feels like, sounds like, what is going well, what needs to change. I do this several times during the build. Once completed, students write about the product they've made. I ask questions such as: What does it look like? How does it move? What are the mechanics? What does it sound like? Who would use it? Where would you see it? I have the students then write a Wikipedia blurb about it. For example:

A Ferris wheel is a towering amusement ride with a large, vertical wheel structure. Passengers board enclosed or open cabins attached to the wheel. As the wheel rotates, it lifts passengers high above the ground, providing them with breath-taking panoramic views of the surrounding area while creating a memorable and enjoyable experience.

Again, having the physical object directly in front of them, where they can touch, play, hear, smell allows students

to use their senses to write. They don't have to think about what happened on the weekend; they use what's in front of them. Those that have amazing imaginations will use them.

Some other writing ideas could be to create an instruction manual, write an advertisement, write some code, create a story (with video or stop motion) write a script or write to accompany the

creation of your own Lego invention. The ideas are endless.

Getting hands on with writing is another tool we can use to inspire and shape our young writers. Lego is great to use with all students, from little ones right through to high school. If you don't have Lego, try creating objects with cardboard.



Ready 4 Learning Foundation Skills

Workshop Presentation

By **Nicole Lowrey**,
MOE Accredited Facilitator,
Ready 4 Learning

In September 2023, I had the privilege of presenting the Ready 4 Learning Foundation Skills workshop at the NZLA Literacy Conference: Lighting the Literacy Pathway. Key points that we covered for success in literacy were how we can support learning transition to school through understanding and supporting foundation skills in the classroom. Teachers in the workshop were experiencing increased pressure of learning and social needs, associated with transition to school.

The Ready 4 Learning Framework was designed to bridge the gap in core skills and enable successful transition between Te Whāriki and the New Zealand Curriculum. The Ready 4 Learning Framework allows us to measure, in a developmentally appropriate and fun way, the skills of moving, speaking, hearing, seeing, print, and Key Competencies so all our learners can participate fully in classroom learning experiences.

What are the Ready 4 Learning Foundation Skills and how do they support learners?

Movement

In the Ready 4 Learning Framework the foundation skill of movement is broken down into gross motor skills and fine motor skills. Children's gross motor skills affect learners' ability to sit up

comfortably in the classroom, on the mat or in a chair. These skills develop through practice and repetition. Fine motor skills are essential for performing everyday tasks especially in classroom literacy and numeracy tasks.

Speaking

Speaking abilities help our learners to communicate how they are feeling to teachers and interact in a positive way with other students. Depth and breadth of language on school entry help students to understand what they are reading and hearing. Low levels of oral language on school entry affect learning interactions, slowing progress in all curriculum areas.

Hearing

Understanding and playing with language through rhyme, learning about syllables and articulating sounds we hear in our environment are essential starters for reading. Auditory processing also supports everyday classroom functions, such as following instructions.

Seeing

Core skills in seeing are visual discrimination, seeing the difference between visual images, and visual memory, holding an image in our minds. If a learner is unable to spot a difference in a picture it will be challenging for them to differentiate between letters in a word. If students have difficulty holding a picture in their

mind it will be more challenging for them to recall information about a story, remember numbers, or instructions to complete a task.

Print

Print awareness, knowing which way to hold a book, where to start reading and learning to point at a word, is important for our learners. Children's performance on print awareness tasks is a reliable predictor of their future reading achievement. Children with print awareness see that, like spoken language, printed language carries messages and is a source of both enjoyment and information.

Key Competencies

Key Competencies are all about engagement, engagement is all about feeling confident and comfortable in what you know. By knowing our learners, we can support them to engage and not overwhelm them.

The Ready 4 Learning Workshop created lots of great discussion about how we can support learning in a way that works for new entrants. There was positive feedback about how the Ready 4 Learning Framework is all in child speak to allow for learner agency and how it provides a diagnostic tool to collect data of a child's start-point at school entry and track their learning progress to ensure learner success. It was wonderful to share knowledge and solutions for working together on transition to support student and teacher success and enjoyment in the junior school.

From Awareness to Action: Empowering dyslexic learners

Workshop Presentation

Interview with **Chris Cole**

Chris Cole is the co-founder of Dyslexia Support South and a very popular presenter in Southland. Her workshop reached capacity extremely quickly and received excellent feedback from attendees. This interview by Kirsten Kean explores her work and message to those of us working with dyslexic learners.

What was your journey into your current role at Dyslexia Support South?

I didn't start as a dyslexia specialist; I'm an accountant by trade. However, when an opportunity arose to teach my children through homeschooling while traveling and then noticing their literacy and learning challenges, I became interested in knowing more. This led to a career change and training into learning differences, ultimately leading to the role I have now. In this new journey, I also found out I was dyslexic. It rocked my perspective of myself and highlighted the emotional impact of living as a neurominority. I work to increase awareness, make changes so that all types of learning and thinking are celebrated, and no one needs to feel they are less than just from thinking in a different way. Seeing a person realise they struggled at school because they are a dyslexic learner and not dumb, or hearing a teacher's aha moment on why students do certain things, "Oh, he's dyslexic and not being naughty," are the best rewards for this work.

Can you provide an overview of your workshop, "From awareness to action: empowering dyslexic learners"?

The workshop always starts by highlighting dyslexic thinking – the strengths and challenges. When we know what these are, we have a base to start understanding the classroom accommodations that work best. Next, we focus on anxiety as a barrier to learning engagement. Anxiety is normal and happens to everyone, but for dyslexic learners, it happens more in the classroom. The anxiety response impacts the students' ability to take in information or to show what they know. The workshop then focuses on what teachers would notice in their classroom with student behaviours that indicate the student is struggling with their learning. These can be subtle clues, such as a student who is really helpful but it means they aren't doing the reading in class, to the student who creates a diversion through poor behavior. Finally, pulling all this information and knowledge

together, the workshop presents practical strategies to support the dyslexic student's challenges, utilise their dyslexic thinking strengths, manage their anxiety, and help to create a better sense of self so the student wants to learn.

Why do you believe these are crucial for empowering dyslexic learners?

By increasing educator awareness about dyslexia, they are better placed to support the dyslexic learner and their whānau. When educators know more about the dyslexia indicators, they can help to increase the self-awareness for the dyslexic learner. For a dyslexic learner to know they are dyslexic from a young age and fully understand what that means for the way they think has lifelong impacts. They will be better able to advocate for themselves as they progress through school, and they have a better chance of keeping their self-worth intact.

As a Learning Differences Advisor, what specific insights or experiences led you to focus on dyslexia in your workshop? How do you see dyslexia impacting learners, and why is it important to address it?

Up to 15% of the population has dyslexia, whether recognised or not. It is the largest 'group' within neurodivergent thinkers overall. This group also includes ADHD and autism. Dyslexia is also what I connect with the most as a parent of dyslexic children and as a dyslexic person myself. I find that understanding dyslexia and the strategies that help dyslexic learners can flow into helping other neurodivergences such as dyspraxia,

dyscalculia, and ADHD. As dyslexia is a language processing issue, dyslexics have to spend more time and effort to learn to read, write, and spell. They need more time and support in the classroom that works with their way of processing information. If not supported, they fall behind, develop poor self-worth views, and anxiety. One of the key impacts I have found is they struggle to understand classroom instructions. If teachers could do one thing, it is to take time to help dyslexic students understand what is required for them to do.

Can you share some of the main challenges that dyslexic learners face in our education system, and what do you recommend addressing or mitigating these challenges?

A primary hurdle lies in the widespread lack of awareness regarding the unique thinking challenges and strengths associated with dyslexia, resulting in a school environment that doesn't meet the specific needs of dyslexic learners. Having specific training on dyslexic thinking and utilising Universal Design for Learning practices will make a difference. Another significant issue arises from information not being presented in a format that works for the dyslexic brain. This mismatch impacts the dyslexic student's learning process. I have found it is common for dyslexic learners to struggle to understand classroom instructions. If teachers could do one thing, it is to take time to help dyslexic students understand in a dyslexia-friendly format what is required for them to do. Importantly, such accommodations not only benefit dyslexic learners but also enhance the learning experience for the whole classroom.

In the workshop, did you discuss any innovative strategies or interventions for supporting dyslexic learners? Could you highlight a few that you find particularly effective or promising?

The key point in supportive strategies is thinking of them in a holistic way and not to apply them individually. For example, structured literacy as a tool is very effective; however, how it is delivered matters for dyslexic students. By this, I mean the teachers using a calm tone of voice and body language, allowing more time, and providing clear instructions in a dyslexia-friendly format.

How do you think awareness about dyslexia contributes to creating an inclusive learning environment? Were there any specific activities or discussions in your workshop that aimed to raise awareness among participants?

I think dyslexia awareness knowledge is a key component in making a difference to an inclusive learning environment. Within the workshop, I include real-life examples to help educators understand how student behaviors are indicators of a student under learning stress. For example, a child daydreaming after a teacher has given verbal instructions can mean their cognitive processing ability has overloaded. I also gave specific examples using diagrams of dyslexic thinking. An example is how a dyslexic learner can struggle to start a writing task if they don't have the big picture (dyslexic strength) of what they need to do and struggle to sequence events in their head (dyslexic challenge).

In your opinion, what role does literacy play in the overall educational experience of dyslexic learners, and how did your workshop address literacy challenges specifically?

Literacy is a game-changer for any learner. With dyslexic learners, learning literacy takes more time and effort, meaning they can easily develop negative views about literacy. My workshop aimed to increase educator awareness of the dyslexic learning journey so they can minimize the negative views and create a learning environment that supports their dyslexic thinking to get maximum engagement.

The Sandman

Workshop Presentation

Interview with **Marcus Winter**

Marcus Winter, aka the Sandman, is a talented New Zealand artist who presented a workshop at the conference. This interview by Joyce Wakelin discusses his presentation and his 'Lightbox in Every School' initiative.

Can you share the inspiration behind your unique name, 'The Sandman,' and how it reflects your approach to storytelling?

'The Sandman' is a reference to my art form in telling stories in sand. It was a catchy phrase when I started performing on cruise ships, trying to come up with a name for my act – which was quite new at the time.

At the core of what I do is help people tell their story/idea in an engaging way through live sand art, so that it is memorable.

Edutainment, people might call it – helping others learn through entertainment (art).

Your work is often described as innovative and captivating. How did you get into this field of work, and who/what inspired you?

In the early 2000s, after finishing high school and considering what career path I should choose, I came across a traveling street artist who created surreal landscapes using only paper and spray cans, making masterpieces in literally minutes! What fascinated

me was not just the artwork but for that period that he worked, people were mesmerised by the creative process, watching something come together. It was there that I realised creating art could be entertaining. That really resonated with me, as prior to that, I thought making art was just for the wall or a gallery – not necessarily providing people with a creative experience.

So, while pursuing my academic endeavours with Business Degrees and a Post Graduate in Creative Advertising, and working part-time, I was still getting out and pushing my art all at the same time. I started out busking at the Otara Markets and Auckland City streets.

Largely self-taught – my rare art techniques I learned from various speed painting artists from overseas, which eventually got me into the realm of sand art – thanks to Richard Jeffery, who sponsored my first lightbox and that opened a whole new world of opportunities.

In your workshop presentation at the 45th NZLA Literacy Conference, what key messages or strategies did you emphasise to promote literacy development?

Place to feel safe — From the expert speakers – regarding learning, one of the points that was raised was, it doesn't matter how awesome the school or teacher is – if a child doesn't feel safe then it will be difficult to learn. When teachers provide a safe, secure environment for children, it definitely helps them be more expressive and learn.

The lightbox offers a place for well-being – there are many 'hauora' concepts from the tactile connecting with the whenua through sand. I've seen how the sand art lightbox helps to settle kids as well; it can be trance-like even. It's beautiful to see kids processing their thoughts and emotions on the sand.

As a kid, I was shy and wasn't necessarily the brightest. However, with art, it was a way I could communicate through imagery and it was something that I enjoyed. Because I kept doing it, people liked it, and it built some self-esteem, which I then applied to help myself learn in the subjects I was weaker in.

Collaborative approach to learning — When speaking with learning assistants, one of the ways to increase literacy is to start from a person's strengths. That could be art, music, dance – how do we make that work?

The Lightbox in Every School programme – one idea in the classroom setting is to have a group (3 or 4) of different abilities work together on creating a sand art story, which involves a range of skills. The idea is to take students' strengths, engage them in creating a story, and work together

collaboratively to help increase literacy by working together.

Benefits of the lightbox in the Classroom — There are many benefits; sand art is not just for 'art's sake' – it can be used across subjects – from Maths, History, Reading, Humanities. It is another dynamic tool for the classroom to help retain information. My goal is to help educators unlock all the various ways to use the lightbox across all subjects.

As a storyteller, how do you navigate the diverse needs of your audience, considering the varied age groups from students as young as 5 years old through to adults?

Good question. I had to learn strategies from my sister, who was a teacher, for different ways to present to pre-schools/junior schools. I knew if I could present to them, I could present to anyone! They are the hardest and best crowds – so honest!!

I'm pretty grateful the art form allows me to move amongst all ages, industries, cultures, and communities – art has a way of connecting where sometimes other things can't.

What role do you see yourself playing when presenting at conferences like the NZLA Conference in Invercargill last year?

Something a little outside the (light) box (no pun intended). I show new ways to engage kids in learning that they can retain or express themselves and tell their stories their way.

At the conference, you worked closely with American author Jeanne Bender, who promoted her latest book based in New Zealand Lindie Lou – Island Treasure. How did you come about this opportunity and your role in the book?

Jeanne Bender saw me performing on a cruise ship – at the time our borders were closed in NZ to cruise ships and I had to fly out to the United States.

While coming out of a buffet lunch one day I was met by a lady who was super energetic; she talked about a book, and this and that, and if I would be open to talk more about it later – I said ‘yeah’ – not thinking too much about it, being cynical and used to people talking ‘smack’ (all talk) but gave her the benefit of the doubt.

Turns out – she was actually a legit author and seriously passionate about what she does.

At the time, Jeanne was finishing her *Lindie Lou Series* book which focused on New Zealand. She asked if I could look over it to make sure it was ok – as a result, she changed the last half of the book and added me in it! Lol!

I advised on the cultural aspects – it was a great learning and sharing experience to introduce concepts of te ao Māori, and asking the illustrator to make me look more significant and muscular than what I actually am was pretty cool.

What were some of your highlights of attending the 2023 NZLA Literacy Conference?

Powhiri — The book launch of *Lindie Lou* was amazing! Very special.

Culture — opening and closing each day with Karakia

Ann Milne — oh geez, she put the smack down, didn’t she! Aue! Tangata Tiriti!

Looking forward, what do you envision as the future of literacy education, and how do you see yourself contributing to the ongoing evolution of literacy initiatives in New Zealand and beyond?

With what I do – I hope to inspire our future storytellers – provide career pathways and increase literacy through the beautiful process of Sand Art Storytelling.

A Lightbox in Every School is a storytelling platform which helps engage students, build self-esteem and confidence, encourage emotional self-expression, increase literacy through the storytelling process (researching, reading, writing scripts, etc.). It improves motor skills, encourages focus and stimulates creativity and artistic exploration. It allows a space for collaboration and for students to have fun while learning.

I look forward to seeing amazing stories told by all including our tamariki – and retained in its many forms – including Sand.

There is a native American proverb which says,

Tell me the facts I’ll learn,
Tell me the facts and I’ll believe
But tell me a story and I remember
it in my heart forever.

Conspiracy Theories

Authors' Evening Speech

By **Ella West**



Ella West

Ella West was born in Invercargill. When she had read her way through the children's library she used her older brother's card and began on the adult section.

She intended to study science like her brothers at the University of Otago but a drama camp she went to when she was fifteen made up her mind to persuade her parents to let her study English literature instead.

She completed a BA at Victoria University.

A university holiday job, reporting at the Southland Times, taught her an understanding of the craft of writing and led her to the West Coast after a stint at the Evening Post in Wellington. In Westport, the journalist married a shearer and together they went dairy farming on the banks of the Buller River. It was there, between getting the cows in for milking, teaching drama and raising two sons, she wrote her first novel, *Thieves*, which was shortlisted in the New Zealand Post Book Awards the following year. *Anywhere But Here* and

Real Life quickly followed completing the *Thieves Trilogy*.

Night Vision won the 2015 Young Adult section of the LIANZA Awards and was the Young Adult Children's Choice winner in the New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults. *Rain Fall*, published in 2018, was a finalist in the Ngaio Marsh Awards. Her latest book, *The Sound of My Heart* has just been released.

She and her family now live on a rural property near Dunedin, where Ella writes full time when she isn't chasing sheep and cattle on the farm.

For the past four months I've travelled through North America visiting family and friends including meeting six great nieces and nephews for the very first time. And along the way I heard some interesting conspiracy theories:

Did you know Michelle Obama is a man, the kids are adopted, and there are photos to prove it?

Prince William is having an affair with

another woman, just like his dad did.

Vapour trails in the sky from planes are actually governments spreading poison into the air to kill us all. It's called dimming.

And don't eat the fish off the Atlantic Coast because the drug runners from Central America are dumping so much cocaine into the sea the fish are full of it.

But there is another conspiracy theory I want to address tonight and it is often repeated, especially in this country. And it is believed.

It's that people don't read.

I last saw it in August in a Newsroom article online. An editor at a New Zealand publishing company had been made redundant. In the article, several of our most well-known authors said how they wouldn't have had a career as a writer if it wasn't for this editor and they were mourning her loss.

There was the belief the editor had lost the position because New Zealanders don't read enough books and so the publishing company was struggling. I quote one of them, and apologies, but it was said, and Newsroom reported it:

"New Zealanders read when I was growing up. They don't anymore. They stare at their... phones."

Someone needs to tell that author people now read books on their phones.

They also read books on kindles and laptops, they read books in hardback and softback, they listen to them when driving their cars or on the bus or walking to work.

In my travels throughout North America it was one thing that constantly struck me. Just like in New Zealand, kids, adults, everyone, they're all still reading books. They read them on North Carolina's windy beaches, in Tim Hortons in the West Edmonton Mall, they read them in my great niece's elementary school in

Mayerthorpe in Alberta and on their school bus – which was big and yellow.

But when New Zealand authors and everyone else in New Zealand complain that people aren't reading books, they actually mean that people are not reading their books – probably the ones carefully chosen by that editor to be published who has now lost her job.

Because now we have so much choice. The Amazon Store has 32.8 million titles, according to Google. U.S. publishers sold 825.7 million copies of print books in 2021 alone. The figures are astounding.

And, after a lot of thinking on my travels through Canada and the US, from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean, and watching all these people read books, some on their phones, I have decided to publish my own books starting with *The Sound of My Heart*, a book which the editor who lost her job turned down many years ago. It has sat on my computer ever since. Now it can finally be read.

The Sound of My Heart is about 16-year-old Emily who runs half marathons. She lives in Cromwell, in Central Otago where her dad is a primary school teacher and her mum works in a winery and she has a baby sister who is learning to walk. An elderly man who lives down the road has a stroke and his wife asks Emily to watch him for an hour or so a couple of times a week so she can go to the supermarket. Emily gets him up walking and out into the sunshine and he shows her that life is not about winning, it is about the race run. Because Emily, although she trains and eats properly and does everything

she can, never wins a half marathon. Half marathons are always won by men in their late twenties and early thirties. There may be age group classes, and women's times but a 16-year-old is never going to break the tape at the finish line. Imagine playing a sport that you can never win.

In between each chapter I have added, what I call fun facts about running, such as did you know, the Boston marathon was won by a New Zealander in 1967 – Dave McKenzie from Runanga on the West Coast. He set a new race record of 2 hours, 15 minutes and 45 seconds. It was the first time he had ever been overseas.

But his win was overshadowed by Katherine Switzer. Up until the 1960s, women were not allowed to run more than 1,500m in sanctioned races as it was believed they were not physically capable and it was dangerous for their health. The only way women could compete in marathons was to join from the side lines and run without a number. However, in 1967, 20-year-old Katherine Switzer entered the Boston Marathon using her initials, KV Switzer. During the race, organisers realised she was a woman and tried to drag her from the course but she was shielded by other competitors. After she finished, she was disqualified and expelled from the athletic federation because she had run with men. However, she continued to campaign to have women allowed to compete officially and in 1972, five years later, the Boston Marathon was finally opened to women. The first Olympic Games to have a women's marathon was the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics.

So, I love this book. I believe this book needs to be read which is why I have

taken the big step (for me) to self-publish. And it hasn't been easy. Thank goodness for kids who could figure out the stuff I couldn't and a daughter-in-law who went to art school and designed my amazing cover.

And I have been surprised by the benefits for readers. Once you have Kindle downloaded, which is free, you can buy *The Sound of My Heart* at one click. You don't have to drive to a book shop and find parking, something that is getting to be impossible in Dunedin where I live. You don't have to order it online and wait two to three months for shipping. And it is the price of a coffee. So cheap.

For a school, teachers can get their pupils to buy a copy themselves on their device and study it. No more expensive class sets required. Kids can download it in dyslexia print to make it easier to read. They can go onto online forums and discuss it, do TikTok stuff, be part of a discussion.

And for teachers, no more class sets to look after, make sure they are returned, find somewhere to store them. And for the world, no trucks to deliver the books. One of the things that blew my mind was the traffic on a particular interstate in Arkansas. Double lane each way full of truck and trailer units plus our rental car stuck in the middle of it all. I soon realised the reason when I came across an Amazon warehouse the size of a New Zealand suburb.

I hope you enjoy *The Sound of My Heart*. Keep up the great work as teachers. Remember, kids read, we read, everyone reads. Don't believe in conspiracy theories.

**Callan Goodall**

I have loved writing for as long as I can remember, right back to my primary school days. I particularly enjoy writing children's books that have great rhythm and rhyme and a sense of fun. I am a born and bred Southerner having lived my early years in Central Otago (Clyde) and the past 30 years in Invercargill. I have spent my adult life working in the education sector, having been a teacher and now a principal. I have written 4,5 novels over time, though have only published the two so far, *Set Me Free* in 2017 and *Pockets of Gold* in 2023. *Midmost Marvin* was published in 2020, though I have drafted four other children's picture books which I one day hope to publish. I have plenty of other concepts bouncing around my brain.

The Joy of Words

Authors' Evening Speech

By **Callan Goodall**

Last year I was lucky enough to speak at a writer's evening as a part of the NZ Literacy Conference in Invercargill. Simply to be in a room with so many people that shared a passion for the craft of writing was a privilege, as was sharing the limelight with my fellow authors Jeanne Bender and Ella West. It was wonderful to hear, and to share, how the path to becoming an author is so unique for each person. Sure, there are some similarities, but in reality, each author has to walk their own path, and it is this aspect which makes it both challenging and rewarding, as well as accessible to anyone with a love of words and a willing spirit.

For as long as I can remember I have had a love of words, I love the way they jostle for space and bounce off one another, almost as if competing and complementing each other in the same breath. My journey began in primary school, with a teacher, Mick Enright, who firstly read to us the amazing stories of Roald Dahl and who secondly introduced us to the concept of Process Writing.

Prior to that writing had been functional and boring, but under his watch my imagination was let loose and a whole new world emerged. Sadly, he was almost the sole teacher through my childhood that created this space for us and it was not until I was in my early twenties that I began writing again for

pleasure. I therefore urge all teachers out there to allow time for creativity, amongst the busyness of learning.

I have a personal passion for children's picture books that rhyme and my first commercially published book *Midmost Marvin* is in this genre. I love the use of clever language features like alliteration and writing that has an almost musical cadence to it. Like all stories it still needs structure and a full story arc, but using rhyme I feel brings it to life for children.

My other passion is crafting children's novels, with *Set Me Free* and *Pockets of Gold*, both now available as ebooks and in paperback via Amazon. They are both novels set in New Zealand and I would love to get them into libraries and classrooms across the country. The feedback on both to date has been really positive, which is great, though marketing them for commercial success is now my next challenge.

For both of these books I chose to self-publish them and this in itself has been a real learning experience. I have used the tools available through Kindle Direct Publishing, which is available to anyone and is relatively user friendly. Once you have crafted your novel and had it edited, it takes you through all of the steps required from formatting text and designing covers, right through to generating an ISBN number and getting it up on the Amazon platform.

As an author there is nothing more rewarding than holding a book in your hands; that is the culmination of your own creativity and hard work. Yes, traditional publishing pathways are still the main source of books in bookstores, but with the world of self-publishing at your fingertips there is now nothing stopping you from bringing your ideas to the world. Whether it is for personal satisfaction, for friends and family, or as a shot at being a fulltime author I would encourage everyone with a story inside them to give it a go; you have nothing to lose and you never know you might just write the right thing at the right time and become a star.

Ka mua, ka muri

By **Maria Rahui-Palmer**

Maria was the recipient of one of the Marie Clay Literacy Trust travel awards in 2022. She travelled to the U.K in 2023.

This article is a story about me, a Māori woman who happens to be a teacher. I didn't start reading for enjoyment until I was twenty. I continue to search through the pages of books to see if it is something that I would enjoy reading. Connection to the story is the catalyst to reading for pleasure. The first book I ever enjoyed was *Pounamu Pounamu* by Witi Ihimaera. My second favourite book is *Mākereti, The Old Time Māori*, a thesis by Mākereti (Maggie) Papakura. Getting meaning from print is easier when the reader can relate to the context. I had to see that their stories were my stories, so Mākereti and Witi enabled that to happen. Achieving literacy did not come easily to me. That is, until I found texts that could relate to my experience as a Māori who is also an academic and a leader of learning.

In 2022, I was awarded the Marie Clay Travel Award. The award provided an opportunity to attend an international literacy conference. I chose The World Literacy Summit Conference held at Oxford University, U.K. My particular interest in this conference was the indigenous and research streams. However, I would soon discover that it was the place Oxford that would invigorate my passion for Māori education and literacy as Māori. This article focuses on two museums and the return to home.



A bomb scare during the conference presentations at Oxford University was frightening. Miles from home and in a place that is different in architecture and culture made me feel vulnerable. An experience that was reminiscent of my school days, a vulnerable feeling that I was shut out of school even when I was present. Rather than risk returning to the afternoon session, I went to the museum. I found Mākereti at one museum, and walked through the pages of well-known English stories at the other. I found stories that I would enjoy reading.

The first story is about Mākereti (Maggie) Papakura Staples-Browne. My whakapapa, like Mākereti, also connects to Te Arawa. At the Pitt Rivers Museum, the Collections Manager had assembled the archived works of Mākereti. Her academic manuscripts were available for us to read, and for me, it was a time to connect to my tūpuna. We felt her presence in her words, and shed tears in connection with my whanaunga, who like me was far from home. But I would return home. Her words showed that she was sometimes lonely. A loneliness caused by separation. I learned so much from Mākereti from her manuscripts. Linda Tuhiwai Smith in *Celebrating 100 Years Since Māori Woman Mākereti Papakura became a Pioneering Student at Oxford* asserts that Mākereti was “the voice of someone from our world... amongst all the men, all the white men who wrote about us and didn’t see us, didn’t see women, didn’t see children, didn’t see love...they didn’t see us and by not seeing us, they erased us from the story of our whenua, of our country.” Mākereti showed that success as Māori at a University happens because it did in 1938. Ka tū rangatira.

The Story Museum in Oxford brings literacy alive. The museum’s vision is to enrich lives, especially young lives, through stories. Daniel Clark, Director of the Creative Programme, showed us manaakitanga and we could make connections. *Narnia series*, *Golden Books*, and *Alice in Wonderland* came alive at the museum. Unlike Alice, I followed not a rabbit but a four-year-old into a wardrobe. She disappeared into this dark space, and like her mother, we were a little concerned. Pushing aside fur coats and a dark wall, we entered into a magical space to find her having



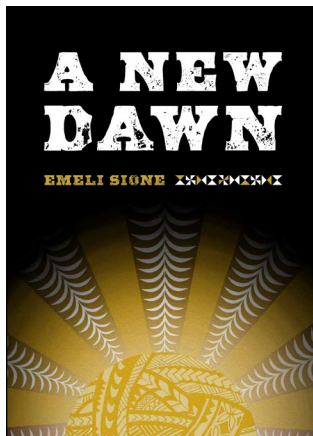
tea in an enchanted forest. Every room we explored had a theme from the pages of well-known English stories. Daniel explained the philosophy of collecting and showing stories. We connected to these narratives and how we as Māori do this too. Thank you, Daniel Clark and the Story Museum for sharing their and our stories. Connection to peoples and places through stories is about us. Literacy gives access to our world and the world.

It's a great feeling to come home. For me, the marae is home too. The wharenuī embodies the diversity of literacy. More importantly, the tūpuna whare shows evolving history and stories about and for their whānau both past, present and those yet to be. Belinda Whyte, and I organised a

literacy hui at the marae as part of the Manawatū Literacy Association events. The focus was narrative about the marae, its people and how the whare shows this. Te Kenehi Te Ira and his daughter Kararaina hosted teachers at the marae. Te Kenehi made connections to people and place and the way the whare shares this. Kararaina taught teachers how to work with children to compile a conservation report. She wove in the science of caring for taonga and the respect that we must show them. Home is where I belong on so many different levels. I am home. I am the whenua. At one with my whānau, I look forward to a future that recognises and looks after me in kindness. I am a highly engaged and literate Māori woman.

He taonga tuku iho no ngā tūpuna.

Book reviews



A New Dawn

Author: **Emeli Sione**

Publisher: **Mila's Books Publishing, 2022**

Reviewed by Kelly Wilkinson,
English Teacher at Central Southland
College

While being aware of some of the details of the dawn raids in Aotearoa, never before have I experienced such a personal and beautifully told account of these terrible days in our history.

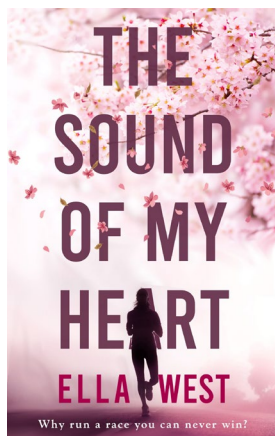
The story takes us on a journey from hope, pride and excitement to pain, loss and betrayal. Sione's perspective as a young girl in "the land of milk and honey" starts with a heartwarming story of her birth and the hopes of her family for a better life on New Zealand's shores. The adventure starts with such joy and excitement that we become fully invested in this family's journey straight away. When her beautiful grandparents are violently ripped from her home and life we can not help but share in young

Sione's trauma and distress. We connect human to human with her loss and the destruction this brutality creates for her family.

As an introduction to the dawn raids of the mid 70s, this journal is cleverly crafted. Beginning with a seemingly simple story, the information that follows is read with empathy and understanding. The clearly told history gives us a deeper understanding of the raids. Told from the point of view of those who were victimised, racially profiled and treated with such disdain, the account of these events takes on a more personal and heartfelt connection for the reader. It ends with an acknowledgement from the New Zealand government that leaves us with a feeling that perhaps the healing can begin. A time of shame for our country will hopefully become a story of "forgiveness, healing and hope for us."

This wonderful tool for sharing the story of the dawn raids reminds us that while we have times of trauma in our history, we can work towards resolution and forgiveness. *A New Dawn* gives "a voice to those who suffered silently". A voice I was moved and humbled to hear so clearly. Perhaps the rising of the sun will bring us all a chance at a new future.

Book reviews



The Sound of my Heart

Author: **Ella West**

Publisher: **Self-published, 2023**

e-book available on Amazon

Recommended for ages 12+ years

Reviewed by Tracy Pasco,

Southland Literacy Association

It was a real pleasure to listen to Ella West speak at a writer's evening as part of the NZ Literacy Conference in Invercargill last year. I jumped at the chance to review her latest book, *The Sound of my Heart*, for two reasons. Firstly, I am a keen (albeit amateur) runner so I enjoyed the running facts and references throughout the story. Secondly, one of themes of this book is suicide – something we need to be talking about more, especially with our young people.

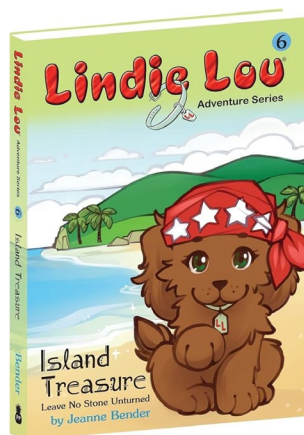
The story is set in Cromwell, where Emily lives with her winemaker Mum, primary school teacher Dad, and her baby sister, Olivia. Emily runs half

marathons. She believes she will never win a race, because she is sixteen and a girl, but she still runs anyway. During a normal training run, where she has a chance to claim a 10km PB (personal best), she encounters an old man trying to throw a rope over a tree branch. She stops to see if she can help him, he rebuffs her, so she continues on her run. On the way back what she sees will change her forever and cause her to examine everything she knows.

As Emily is grappling with what has happened, a neighbour, Mr Harris, suffers a stroke. Emily's parents volunteer Emily to take care of him while his wife gets the groceries. As she helps him to walk again, Emily's baby sister, Olivia, is also taking her first steps and in awe of the world. Emily embarks on a campaign to help Mr Harris find the world amazing again, like the way Olivia sees it.

Amidst all of this, Emily is still trying to get ready for her next half marathon. Emily has always focused on winning and the finish, but will she realise that how you run the race is just as important as how you finish it?

Book reviews



Island Treasure: Leave No Stone Unturned

Author: **Jeanne Bender**

Publisher: **Pina Publishing, Seattle, 2023**

Reviewed by Heather Bell,
Auckland Literacy Association

This is the sixth early chapter book in a series titled the *Lindie Lou Adventure Series*, featuring a puppy named Lindie Lou who loves to explore, and to make new friends. Lindie Lou's first four adventures are set in the USA, and her fifth is above the arctic circle in Norway. Such settings allow young readers to experience diversity in many different forms. This latest chapter book in the series brings Lindie Lou and her friends to Aotearoa New Zealand.

The story is not simply straightforward but skilfully weaves some of the history involving the shipwreck of the HMS Buffalo in Mercury Bay, Whitianga, and sensitively explores the nature

of what is precious through the search for a pounamu greenstone hei tiki heirloom. A local historian is introduced, along with a sand artist. Marcus Winter, the sand artist, is not only a key character, but has been an excellent central advisor in things taha Māori. The story, the glossary, the explanations, and the supplementary information all combine to powerfully strengthen the opportunities for young readers to extend their cross-cultural understanding without being patronising in any way.

Jeanne's editor wrote to the Auckland Literacy Association to ask for someone to assist Jeanne and to validate her story. Rob Southam and I were 'selected', and after our first zoom meeting with Jeanne we were delighted to be involved. She is a warm, enthusiastic, caring and thoroughly engaging person who works hard to promote stories that operate on many different levels. Her willingness to come to New Zealand to attend and actively participate in the NZLA conference in Invercargill and to bring Marcus with her, spoke volumes about her commitment.

I'm looking forward to talking with a group of young readers to explore perceptions of what constitutes cultural treasures, how we value these, and how Lindie Lou helps to further our learning. AND, already I'm looking forward to Lindie Lou's next adventure!

Book reviews



Violet's Scarf

Author: **Colleen Brown**

Illustrator: **Emma Lay**

Reviewed by Lorraine Dallas,
Curriculum Lead, Ministry of Education,
Southland

The author Colleen Brown was inspired to write this true story when tracing her whakapapa to Ōraka/Colac Bay 10 minutes out of Aparima/Riverton and to Whenua Hou/Codfish Island, a small island off to the West of Stewart Island.

Visiting Te Hikoi the Aparima/Riverton museum Colleen listened to a recording of Violet Cloughley retelling the story of when she was 8 years old during WW1. In her story Violet shares that after a visit from the Red Cross at Riverton school she decided to help the soldiers fighting overseas, after all her brother was one of those soldiers. Even though she was busy on the farm she knitted a scarf (learning to knit a scarf at the age

of 8 was a Cloughley whānau tradition). After finishing the scarf Violet wrapped it up in brown paper with string and attached a label that read,

‘Gift for Soldier
Knitted by Violet Cloughley
Aged: 8 years
Riverton School’

The scarf began its long journey from the bottom of the South Island to the other side of the world with all the other parcels from schools around Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Violet's brother George was stationed in France, missing home he looked forward to letters telling the news of the farm and family. One day great excitement in the camp as word spread that parcels were arriving from the Red Cross. Along with the other soldiers George ran and crowded in. The soldiers leapt in the air as the parcels were thrown willy-nilly out to them all. As a parcel came flying towards him, he jumped into the air and grabbed it and read the tag. George could not believe that he had caught a parcel from his little sister Violet!

Warning – page 25 is an absolute tearjerker and when reading aloud must be read with the mixed emotion that George would have been experiencing – he smelt HOME. The scarf became George's most precious possession. George returned from war to Riverton in 1918, wearing the scarf.

This is a heart-warming true story. Colleen and Emma have captured the emotion

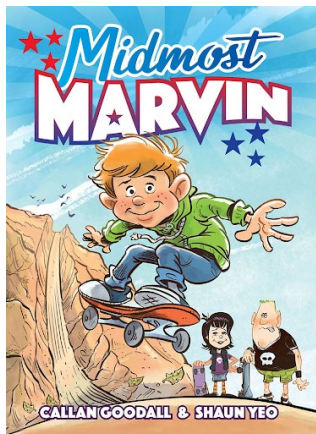
Book reviews

through both the words and illustrations. As Colleen put in her latest newsletter, 'One Scarf, One Story, One Nation'.

Reading this story I was emotionally involved (living in Ōraka/Aparima rohe) while with my curriculum hat on I could see many teaching opportunities and the links to Aotearoa New Zealand Histories, English, Mathematics, the Arts and *Te Mātaiaho*. The resources Ata and Oho (<https://ssol.tki.org.nz/Refreshed-social-sciences/Ata-and-Oho-within-Social-sciences-Te-ao-tangata>) would support in exploring the social emotional aspects of the story. This beautiful book/story can be used from early learning through to the later phases of the curriculum. An absolute must have if you are teaching ANZAC or WWI history. Colleen has added at the end of the book 'More to talk about ...'. Information about the NZ Red Cross, George's War, an extract from a knitting book that was used to knit items for the soldiers, a timeline from when Violet turned eight until the Armistice 11 November 1918. Colleen has now written teacher notes/guide (peer reviewed) and these are available on her website.

Thank you, Colleen and Emma, for bringing alive this wonderful true story and creating many learning opportunities for our ākonga about this important time in our history.

Book reviews



This book has been published in hardback, as the publishers valued the message in the book, rather than paperback.

Callan Goodall is a Primary School Principal in Southland, and Shaun Yeo is also a local illustrator, who has illustrated several other children's books.

Available from www.youngreflections.co.nz

Midmost Marvin

Author: **Callan Goodall**

Illustrator: **Shaun Yeo**

Publisher: **David Bateman Publishing Auckland**

RRP: **\$24.99**

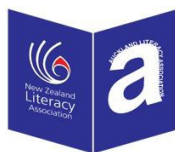
Reviewed by Joy Brown,

Owner – Young Reflections, Children's Book and Toy shop, Invercargill

Marvin is a 10 year old boy, who doesn't particularly like school, but discovered he is good at skateboarding. Written in rhyming language, the story tells of Marvin wanting to impress a girl who also likes skateboarding. He wants to impress her with a stupendous skateboarding stunt over Death Valley. This is a delightfully told tale of making an impression and daring, Midmost Marvin proves you don't have to be extraordinary to stand out.

Council reports

Auckland



Here in Auckland we're working hard to strengthen and extend our association – to increase our membership, enlarge our committee and to constantly provide high quality professional learning and development for our teachers and children.

Our Term 4 general meeting featured Dr John Milne from AUT who shared his research into Reading for Pleasure. Given the proposed changes in literacy policy from the Government, it is more important than ever that teachers foster children's reading for pleasure. John stressed the importance of children seeing teachers as readers, and the importance of the correlation between those who read widely for pleasure and high academic content. The report of this meeting in our Term 4 newsletter was very well received. John and his colleagues are planning further research into this vital area, so we will await their results with interest.

Our Term 4 newsletter also featured conference reports from Anna Watkin and Moira Newton who were our ALA sponsored teachers to the national NZLA conference in Invercargill – and their reports accurately identified the outstanding content, organisation and operation of the conference. Special thanks to Anna and Moira for their patience as their initial sponsorships

had been awarded a few years ago but had not been able to be taken.

Part of who we are involves recognising and acknowledging the contributions of our members. A few years ago, and for a variety of legitimate personal reasons, we had resignations from a president, two president-elects and a couple of long standing committee members. So, when Margaret Carter, our current President, agreed to assume the presidential role, we were thrilled. She was very ably assisted by Anna Watkin who became our president-elect. Our committee has been fortunate to have had the services of two such excellent educators who have well and truly 'earned their stripes'. Margaret finishes her term at our upcoming AGM, earning our deepest thanks. Anna will then begin her two year presidential term.

At our last general meeting we also acknowledged the exemplary, long standing service of two wonderful people – Professor Emeritus Warwick Elley and Dr Libby Limbrick, and awarded these stars with Life Membership to ALA. Both have built golden reputations in the literacy world through their contributions to research, children's literature, ALA and several affiliated associations. Both also continue to 'give back' so we are extremely fortunate to have two such wonderful people in our literacy world.

Our AGM is approaching, along with the launch of Dr Murray Gadd's latest book, *Building Young Writers*. Murray is our AGM speaker and is always an excellent speaker so we know that we'll be treated to sound educational practice and

Council reports

of sensible, practical ideas. His book will be for sale, and already people are ordering this from Learning Network, New Zealand.

The AGM signals the beginning of the 2024 literacy year, and we've planning some great general events, including a special event for children.... But more

later! Check our NZLA page for ongoing details, and our Facebook page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/alanewzealand?mibextid=LQOJ4d>

Heather Bell,
ALA delegate

Hawke's Bay



As I look out at the glorious Hawke's Bay February sunshine, I find it hard to believe the events of last February's Cyclone Gabrielle could have happened. But of course it did, and some communities are still in recovery mode, even now. The impacts of the cyclone were far reaching, and the HBLA was not immune. As a result, we hosted only two events last year, despite having planned for four.

Our first event was hosting Sharron Fabbish. Sharron presented ways in which to utilise a range of books published by the Ministry of Education and others. Sharron's presentation focused particularly on te reo Māori books and readers (hardcopies and digital) that have been designed for classroom use in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Attendees explored picture books, dual language books and te

reo Māori only books. The aim of this interactive session was for attendees to leave with some practical ideas/suggestions of how to incorporate te reo Māori books/readers into their literacy programme as well as utilising more te reo Māori in every teaching with ākongā.

Because we were experiencing major traffic congestion due to damage caused by our dear Gabrielle, we held Sharron's event in both Hastings and Napier. This worked well, and the event was well attended; 54 registered with 48 attending (due to yet more extreme weather on the day of the Hastings event). We received positive feedback from the event and Sharron was a fabulous presenter to work with.

Our second event was hosting Dr Christine Braid. Christine is an educator with both practical and research experience. She was a classroom teacher for 12 years and has been involved in teacher education with Massey University since 1997. She was involved with the Massey University Early Literacy Research Project (published in August 2019); a longitudinal study

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investigating ways to improve literacy outcomes of new entrant children during and beyond their first year at school. While Christine continues her work researching and demonstrating a structured approach to literacy, she is also in a working party with the Ministry of Education, advising the Minister of Education as the new curriculum is being rolled out. She is recognised and valued for maintaining a critically reflective stance regarding a structured approach to literacy, always linking back to findings within the research.

Similarly to her previous appearance in Hawke's Bay, the event was oversubscribed, with an extremely high level of interest. As a result, we are hoping to have Dr Braid back this year. While Christine may be best known for her work in the phonics / alphabetic principle area of literacy, this time she presented ideas and resources for

the 'top of the reading rope' focusing primarily on innovative and engaging ways to teach students about sentence construction. Attendees got to take a closer look at two key components that can make a big difference when we get them right - Spelling and Sentence structure. Teachers went away buzzing with all sorts of practical, fun, and hands-on ways to teach students from 5 years onwards about sentences and how they work.

The HBLA committee is looking forward (fingers firmly crossed) to a year without pandemics or cyclones; to a year full of exciting educational learning. We have four events planned for this year: Marcus Winter, Murray Gadd, Christine Braid and Donovan Bixley. 2024 is going to be a wonderful year!

Dr Kate Rowntree,
Delegate

Taranaki



At our final TLA meeting for 2023, we reflected and celebrated our achievements as a committee. We scheduled various workshops throughout the year which were well attended, particularly Emma Nahna's workshop 'From Tradition to Transformation: Embracing Evidence-Based Assessment in Aotearoa.'

As a committee, we have great pleasure in donating books to various community groups in Taranaki at the end of each year. We donated some beautiful picture books to Te Puna Trust for their delivery of the Nurture Taranaki programme for young mothers and also a large quantity to Flourish, a charitable, community collaboration that delivers a variety of workshops for whānau; they were gratefully received.

In term three, a few members of the TLA scheduled a Google Meet with the Manawatū Literacy Association to learn more about their initiatives to

Council reports

increase membership; this was very interesting and we appreciated their time and ideas.

As in previous years, a survey was shared with all kura to provide feedback about the workshops and support that the TLA provides. The survey results indicated that the professional development we offer is beneficial, relevant and engaging. There is still a need for more workshops around the Structured Literacy pedagogy

which we aim to provide this year, and hope to confirm workshops in the coming weeks.

We wish the NZLA, councils, kura and readers a happy, successful year of continuing to share the love of literacy, and encouraging and supporting literacy learning in Aotearoa.

Jo Francis-Alles,
President

Wellington



In Term 2 we held our very successful Oral Language: Snapshots of Practice event for teachers. Committee member Brigit, worked with five inspiring teachers who each shared an example of how they support oral language development with their students. This lively, practical session was very well attended and the audience actively interacted with questions and comments. We all appreciated the teachers' high quality presentations (including Kate and Marlaina from the committee).

In September, in recognition of International Literacy Day we bought books for Wesley Community Action. We chose a selection of bilingual board books for the youngest readers and another set of books featuring te reo

Māori for older readers. We also made a donation towards an initiative run by the World Literacy Foundation to help make books available to girls in Afghanistan.

Several of our committee members were able to attend the incredible 2023 conference hosted by Southland. We wish to acknowledge the success of that conference and the valuable opportunity it gave us to see how conferences can support and grow our teaching community and our literacy learners.

At our term four event, Great Books for Every Classroom (compered by Jenna), two Wellington teachers presented their favourite books (mentor texts) to use in the classroom and shared their great ideas about engaging students as readers. We also had a wonderful display of books from The Children's Bookshop in Kilbirnie. Bookshop owner, Susan Hooper, talked about books to suit a diverse range of readers

Council reports

and updated us with the most popular titles for 2023. The wealth of Susan's knowledge and passion for books reflected her many years as a superb and passionate teacher of reading.

Our committee are now making early inroads into our own preparation for the exciting prospect of hosting the NZLA national conference in Wellington on 21-24 September 2025.

A big focus for WLA this year is to try and grow our committee. We have big goals, but we need more hands to help us achieve them!

Christina Thornley,
WLA committee member

Otago



Kia ora koutou,

We are excited about the year ahead here in Otago. We returned from the annual NZLA conference in Invercargill inspired, revitalised and ready to 'go big' in 2024! This year our focus and theme is on writing. This is always an area where teachers are looking for ideas, tools and approaches that support our ākonga. We are looking forward to the journey ahead as we weave our way through the wonderful world of writing. We have approached some of NZ's leading experts in writing and look forward to our members being inspired, motivated and having opportunities to network and collaborate with others.

In term one we have a workshop presented by Andrea Robertson on

using AI to support planning & teaching of writing. This coincides with world book day and a talk by Gavin Bishop so attendees will be able to head up the road to Otago University to hear Gavin's presentation.

In term two we have an evening with Jill Eggleton hosted at the Dunedin Public Library. At the end of the term, we are holding a two day symposium with Sheena Cameron, Louise Dempsey and Gail Loane as our keynote speakers. In term three we have a one day workshop with a focus on writing and linking literacy to play with Dr Sarah Aioni. The final event in term four is An Evening with Christine Braid.

We have a small but dedicated team here in Dunedin and we are all passionate about literacy education. We look forward to seeing what new learning 2024 brings!

Kā mihi nui,
Andrea Robertson,
Otago Literacy Association President

Council reports

Southland



The Southland Literacy Association ended a successful 2023 year at a Christmas Dinner function in December where we celebrated what we achieved together as a committee last year. We have retained a strong committee as well as welcoming some new faces joining the SLA this year.

Some events that we are planning for 2024 are:

The Authors and Illustrators event is set to take place in Term Two and it is always a fantastic blend of enthusiasm, creativity and literary talent. We are fortunate to have authors and illustrators willing to share their insights and engage with our school students.

We are excited that 'Marcus the Sandman' will be making his way back down south to visit schools for a week next term where he will share his magical way of storytelling. Marcus was a highlight of the conference last year and we are sure our students will be just as impressed with his talents as the conference attendees were!

The Southland Literacy Association is also committed to continuing our other initiatives that support literacy in the community and are looking forward to another busy and rewarding year!

If you are in the Southland area and would like to come to a meeting to see what we are all about, please email us at southlandliteracy@nzla.org.nz. We would love for you to join us!

Kirsten Kean,
Southland Literacy Association
President



The Southland Literacy Association Committee

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