



Literacy Aotearoa  
Choice Change Freedom

2013

*Adult Literacy Provision and Early Childhood Achievement  
Report for The Ministry of Education*

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**Figure 1: Literacy Aotearoa Nationwide Service Provider (Poupou) Centres**



## Executive Summary

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This report reflects the outcomes achieved over a 10-week period that identifies key lessons learned in the area of effective parents and whānau engagement in literacy and numeracy programmes.

Literacy Aotearoa recognises that adult literacy issues affect not just the current generation of adults but also the literacy acquisition and educational performance of their children and whānau. In this light, the work of Literacy Aotearoa aims to address adult literacy needs including intergenerational achievement and learners' wellbeing. Working alongside the Ministry of Education provided opportunities to foster collaborative partnerships with the intent of helping to realise far-reaching social, economic and cultural benefits for Māori, Pacific and youth populations.

To achieve this objective the following question was posed by Literacy Aotearoa and the Ministry of Education: What is the value of parents' literacy learning and participation that creates significant changes in their children's early years?

### Key findings generated from this programme

#### *Gaining confidence and increased self-awareness*

The learners gained confidence in their abilities and this led the learners to explore new ways of engaging with their children and other members of their whānau. This confidence also resulted in them being able to engage with the school.

#### *Increased support for preparing children for Early Childhood Education, Te Kōhanga Reo, and school*

Some learners required increased support as they openly shared their initial reluctance of enrolling their child into ECE. In some cases they did not consider ECE as an option especially if they had older children. They also did not know how to help their child/children or realise that there was a process for supporting preschool children to prepare for ECE or school.

#### *Shifting Thinking: Evidencing how parents valued impacts of learning literacy and numeracy*

Learners improved their own literacy and numeracy skills by shifting their thinking about how to engage with their young children.

#### *Positive changes in parenting styles*

The programme affirmed for many parents positive aspects of their parenting methodology validating their capabilities and inspiring them to continue. For other parents the course enabled them to devise new strategies for teaching, learning and modelling new behaviours and attitudes.

### *Valuing teaching and learning with child/children*

Learning about teaching and learning methods proved helpful for learners who saw reading and creating fun in the way they directed instruction for their children.

### *Resourcing*

There were some issues of resourcing particularly in the area of providing support for the learner and the contacts with various stakeholders.

### *Developing appropriate approaches to learning*

Part of the success of the programme was based on adult learners being able to engage in flexible programmes designed to meet their goals, pre-existing knowledge abilities and focus. As adult learners gained an interest in the programme, the tutor was able to understand the learner's situation and context which in turn helped them to develop delivery models and provisions that were designed to meet their needs.

### *Pursuing further education and professional development opportunities*

Learners also indicated that they wanted to further their education and improve their situation. Others were looking for ways to improve their chances of gaining employment.

## 1. Introduction

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This report presents the findings of a Ministry of Education Whānau Adult Literacy initiative. The Whānau Literacy initiative was piloted by 12 Literacy Aotearoa member providers (Poupou) between July 2013 and September 2013 over a 10-week period. Based on the Early Learning Taskforce to improve outcomes for children transitioning into school and throughout their first year, the programme aimed to improve early literacy and numeracy experiences for parents and their children.

***This report presents*** the findings of a small research project that sought to identify the changes that occurred in parents' homes as a result of the literacy and numeracy programmes. The research also addressed the extent that parents/whānau now think about the need to prepare their child/children for Early Childhood Education or school. The report addresses the impact the programme has made on adults and their whānau as their child/children transition into school.

### Background to this programme

#### *Ministry of Education Initiative*

In June of 2013 the Ministry of Education approached Literacy Aotearoa to undertake a Whānau Literacy pilot initiative with a group of 65 adult learners who have young children at home and/or in their care. The Education Report *Improving Foundations and Early Transitions* [METIS 747581 refers] outlined areas in which the Ministry could make an impact, namely:

1. transitions into school;
2. improving early literacy and numeracy experiences for children with little or no ECE participation;
3. improved emphasis on foundation literacy and numeracy skills in new entrant classes mostly focused on children that did not have strong early learning experiences prior to school entry (Mutukaroa).

Building on the existing work of Literacy Aotearoa, this Whānau literacy and numeracy initiative is linked to the first two areas outlined above. The aim is to gain traction for improving literacy and numeracy outcomes for parents through active engagement in their child/children's preparation for education. Parents' feedback in earlier research undertaken by Literacy Aoteroa and in conjunction with Te Wahanga, NZCER indicates that improvements in adult learners, whānau and tamariki wellbeing can include *personal development, increased employability, greater support for their children's education and improved relationships* (Potter, H., Taupo, K., Hutchings, J., McDowall, S., and Isaacs, I., (2011).

This Whānau literacy and numeracy programme has been informed by such evidence and strengths based research.

#### *Evidence Based Research*

Additional research by Hutchings, et al., (2012); Munroe, B., and Isaacs, P., (2013) and Taupo, K., and Isaacs, P., (2013) share similar examples of parents and Whānau members making improvements in their personal and social wellbeing through various literacy and numeracy activities and strategies.

These achievements include *families working together, challenging intergenerational issues including lack of confidence, communication and inactivity, parents learning with and alongside their children, developing strategies for life and gaining a sense of identity through language, Te Reo Maori* as a result of literacy and numeracy gains in English and also in Māori literacy programmes.

Critical to the success of these programmes was the ability to provide a delivery of service that accords with the values and principles of Māori. As the majority of learners who took part in the programmes that are the subject of this report identified as Māori, it was imperative that appropriate cultural practices and approaches for engagement and delivery were observed. For example, the concept of whakawhanaungatanga was an important step before talking about any Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) programme. It was important for adult learners and Poupou to establish relationships and relate to others through whakapapa whereby people enter into a relationship with the world, with people and with life where there is no beginning and no end but a constant process of engagement through relationships.

The approach of whakawhanaungatanga aligns with current research undertaken by Associate Professor Beverly Lawton in 2013 from the University Of Otago School Of Medicine, Wellington that talks about health inequalities for young Māori women and their babies.

The practice of whakawhanaungatanga was an important aspect of the programmes that were part of this initiative.

### *Report structure*

There are seven sections in this report. Section 2 outlines the programme objective and questions that underpin the rationale for the Whānau literacy programme. Section 3 sets out the critical features of the programme that highlight its distinctive attributes within the context of adult literacy and numeracy education. Section 4 provides examples of adult learners' experiences of the Whānau literacy and numeracy programmes they attended. Sections 5 and 6 highlight the value and impact literacy and numeracy learning has had on adult learners' lives and the lives of their children respectively. Finally, Section 7 provides a summary of recommendations made in preceding sections.

## 2. Pilot Programme objective and questions

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A primary objective for this Whānau literacy and numeracy programme is to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for parents by increasing and improving engagement of young children (preschool age) in educational activities especially as they transition into school.

To achieve this objective the following question was posed by Literacy Aotearoa and the Ministry of Education: *What is the impact of parents' literacy learning and participation on their engagement in the engagement of children in some form of early childhood education?*

The programmes were of 10 weeks' duration and involved up to 50 hours of tuition. The results, whilst encouraging and consistent with findings in earlier research involving Literacy Aotearoa, are an indication of the changes that need to be made. Reports from Ngā Poupou confirm that many of the learners wish to continue the learning to consolidate the gains they have made. These Poupou are seeking ways to further provide continuing literacy services for many of the learners.

To answer this question a series of sub-questions have been considered to demonstrate the different ways that parents and/or caregivers engage with their child/children at home, especially supporting their transition into Early Childhood Education or school throughout their first year.

**Table 1: Sub-questions for Adult Learners and Poupou**

Sub-questions for Adult Learners	Sub-questions for Poupou
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What will you do differently with regard to preparing your tamaiti/tamariki for school?</li><li>• What new activities will you carry out with your tamaiti/tamariki beyond this programme?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How was your programme provided?</li><li>• How did you engage with whānau?</li><li>• What activities did you provide in your programme to assist parents to support their tamariki?</li><li>• How did your programme assist adult learners in preparing their children for school?</li><li>• What resources did you use that were effective for the programme's success?</li><li>• What changes did adult learners identify as having occurred in their lives as a result of participating in this programme?</li><li>• What kinds of things/activities could adult learners/parents use to help them support their children's transitions?</li><li>• When things did not work as you intended, what did you do? Who was involved?</li></ul>

## Adult learners at the centre of this programme

Twelve adult literacy providers (Poupou) of Literacy Aotearoa, with high numbers of enrolled Māori parent adult learners, were selected on the basis of their ability to reach the target group of learners within the time frames of the project. The regional locations of participating Poupou included: Central Auckland, South Auckland, Waiheke, Tauranga, Taupo, Turangi, Gisborne, Whanganui, Dannevirke, Levin, Lower Hutt and Ashburton.

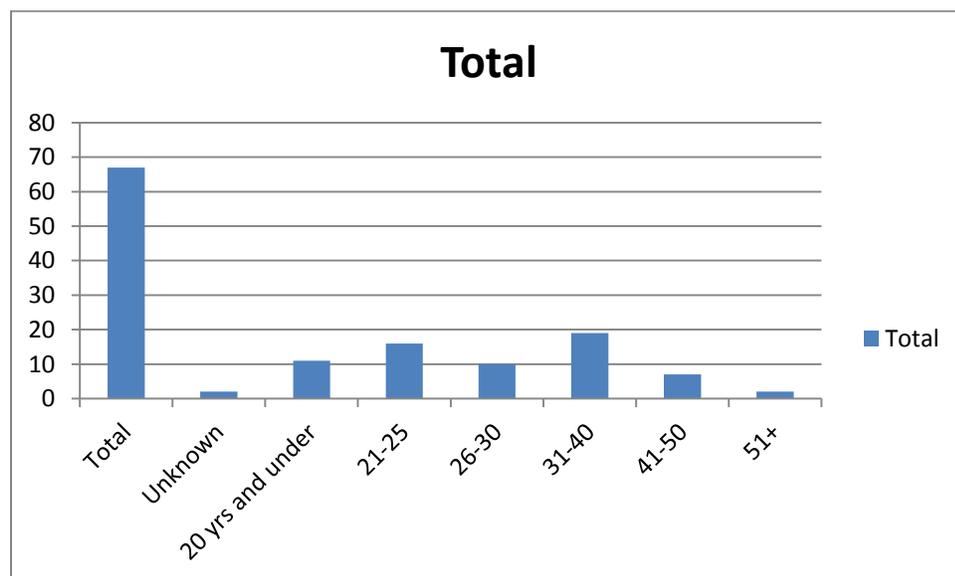
## Whānau Literacy Learner Profile

The outcomes were for 65 adult learners to take part in this programme. Upon completion 67 adult learners in total participated in the 10-week literacy and numeracy programme, with an overwhelming majority identifying as Māori.

- 56 Māori
- 5 Pakeha (European)
- 1 Samoan
- 4 Other
- 1 Unknown

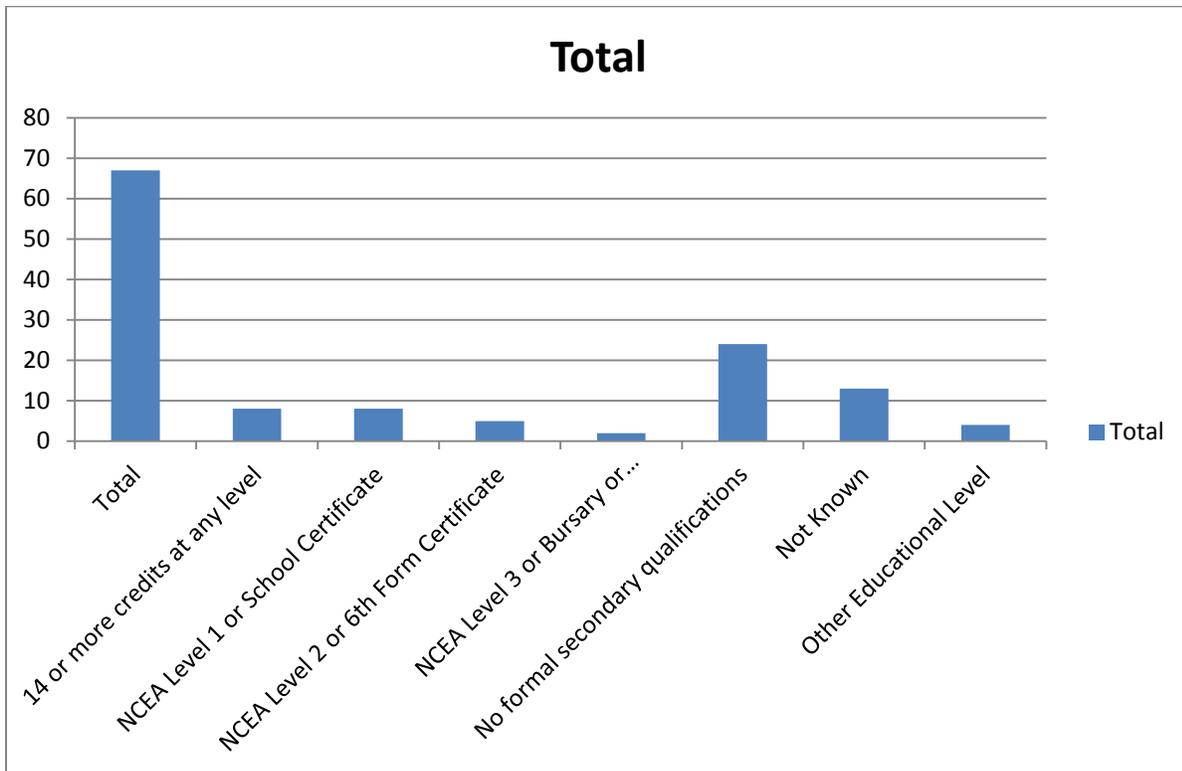
Twelve per cent of learners were aged between 31 to 40 years compared to nine per cent of the learners aged between 21 to 25 years. Ninety-two per cent of adult learners were female.

**Table 2: Learner Age Range**



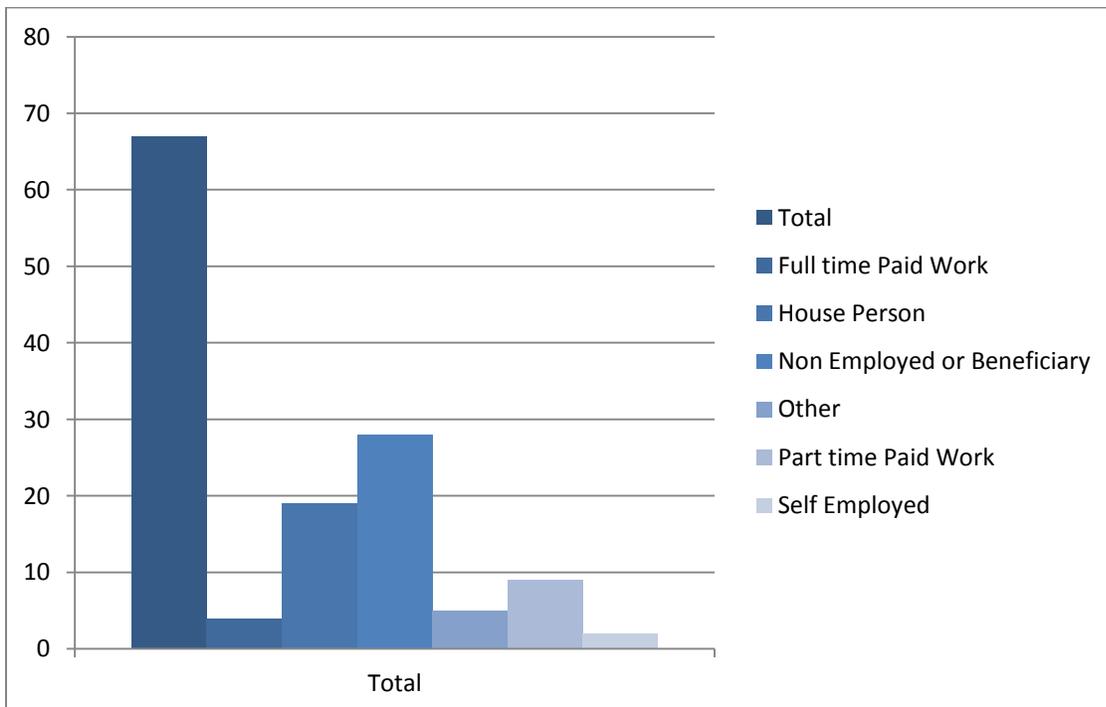
Sixteen per cent of learners had no formal secondary qualifications. At the same time, five per cent of learners equally said their highest level of educational achievement was gaining 14 or more credits at any NCEA level and five per cent noted they had achieved NCEA Level 1.

**Table 3: Learner Education Levels**



Twenty eight per cent of learners were not employed or currently receiving a Work and Income New Zealand benefit, and 18% of the learners said they were a full-time house person, compared to two per cent self-employed and four per cent full-time paid workers.

**Table 4: Learner Employment Status**



**Table 5: Total number of preschool children who benefited from the Whānau LLN programme, age range and whether they were enrolled in an ECE programme or not**

Regions	# of pre-school children	Age range	# of children <u>not enrolled</u> in an ECE prior to the course	# of children enrolled in ECE after the course	Comments
Auckland	10	2 x 1 year 3 x 3 years 5 x 4 years	1	1 x learner was considering enrolling her older child and younger children in future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The majority of preschool children were already enrolled in an ECE centre.</li> </ul>
South Auckland	8	1 x 2 years 7 x 4 years	0		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All children attend Te Kōhanga Reo.</li> </ul>
Waiheke	10	8 months - 4 years			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fiona still to follow up.</li> </ul>
Tauranga	6	3 x 3 years 2 x 2 years 1 x 1 year	6	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As a result of the course five out of six children are now enrolled with an ECE provider.</li> </ul>
Gisborne	9	6 x 2 2.5 years 2 x 4 years 1 x 6 month old pepi	4	1 x 4 yrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not know about the remaining four children.</li> </ul>
Whanganui	4	2 – 5 years	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three children were enrolled in ECE/Kōhanga.</li> </ul>
Turangi	8	1 x 3 years 5 x 14 to 24 months 2 x 2 years	5	All five children are now enrolled in an ECE centre.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three children were enrolled in ECE/Kōhanga Reo.</li> </ul>
Taupo	5	1 x 3 years 3 x 4 years			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Five children were enrolled in ECE programmes.</li> </ul>

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Regions	# of pre-school children	Age range	# of children <u>not enrolled</u> in an ECE prior to the course	# of children enrolled in ECE after the course	Comments
Ashburton	11	1 – 4.5 years	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No children were enrolled or enrolled after the course. However, the Poupou are working with Ministry of Education to develop a playgroup to provide structured activities to assist parents and tamariki with learning prior to starting school.</li> </ul>
Tararua	5	2 x 8 mths – 2 years 1 x 3 years 2 x 4 years			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Five children were enrolled in Kōhanga Reo.</li> </ul>
Levin	6	1 x 1 year 2 x 2 years 2 x 3 years 1 x 5 year	4	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two children were enrolled in Kōhanga Reo before the course.</li> <li>Four children were enrolled in an iwi playgroup after the course.</li> </ul>
Lower Hutt	12	2 x 0-1 years 4 x 2-3 years 4 x 3-4 years 2 x 4-5 years	4	Three children were enrolled into a preschool facility after the programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Five children were enrolled in ECE/Kōhanga Reo.</li> <li>Four children were undecided about enrolling into an ECE.</li> </ul>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>94</b>		<b>24</b>	<b>15</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Twenty-six children were enrolled in Kōhanga Reo.</b></li> <li><b>Fifteen children were enrolled in ECE</b></li> <li><b>Four children undecided.</b></li> <li><b>Twenty children were enrolled in a playgroup or ECE as a result of the course.</b></li> </ul>

### *Recruitment of target adult learners*

The recruitment strategies across the 12 sites varied depending on the Poupou. These strategies included Poupou talking to existing students. Some of these learners agreed to participate in the programme themselves or nominated someone they knew in their own whānau. In other cases Poupou said 'word of mouth' was the most effective strategy as tutors and Poupou promoted the programme throughout their existing networks, including the appointment of a community champion who was well known in the community. Other Poupou drew on their existing relationships with local schools and also met with community leaders and decision makers.

Another Poupou promoted the programme on the local radio show or used social media such as Facebook to encourage learner participation by sharing information, videos and photos of various activities. Other Poupou disseminated posters in local businesses with their permission and met with various community groups and organisations to request their support for recruiting adult learners. In one instance a whole community was invited to attend the programme as well as a number of other programmes over a two-day period. This strategy included the use of a marae where it was evident that intergenerational learning and engagement could take place between kaumātua, adults, teenagers, rangatahi and babies.

## 4. Critical features of the Pilot Programme

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A critical feature of the programme included the importance of creating tuition that is learner centred. This means adult learners are encouraged to direct their own learning and share responsibility with their tutor for achieving their learning goals and aspirations. The expectation is that learners' achievement and effectiveness will be jointly evaluated by adult learners and tutors. As well as a strong focus on student-centred learning there is particular emphasis on tailoring programmes that reach groups, namely Māori, Pasifika and youth.

The project had three components:

1. Pilot programme provision of language, literacy and numeracy programmes to parents and their whānau.
2. An Evaluation Study that provided evidence of how investment in whānau-focussed literacy and numeracy programmes could contribute to children's Early Childhood Education engagement and success.
3. Indicative roll out costs for a wider project..

At an operational level the literacy programmes were designed to reflect the everyday lives and contexts of the adult learners and consisted of:

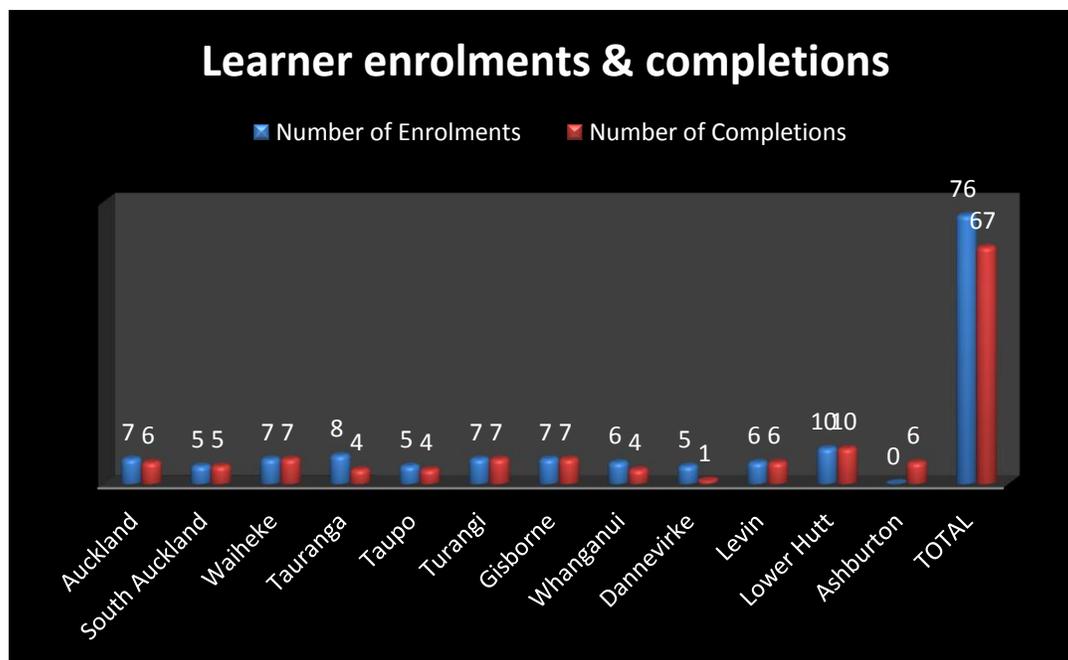
- an Initial Assessment for each literacy learner;
- five hours tuition per week for 10 weeks as part of a group;
- liaising with different stakeholders;
- monitoring progress; and
- development of resources.

### *Programme provision*

Based on the methodology above a mixed method approach of programme provision was undertaken. Programmes included 1:1, small group and noho marae (two-day wananga at a marae) tuition sessions. Sessions included adult learners participating in five hours of tuition per week or two sessions of two and a half hours per week at a total of 50 hours. In some cases adult learners and their whānau including children, partners, husbands, wives, grandparents, uncles and aunties benefited from the course by taking part in wananga at noho marae or at Poupou premises in the group sessions.

The following table sets out the number of enrolments each region documented as well as the number of programme completions.

**Table 6: Number of Learner enrolments and completions**



### *Programme learning outcomes*

The learning outcomes included statements that described the significant learning that adult learners achieved as a result of the Whānau literacy programme in terms of what they knew and what they could do at the end of the programme. This included gaining new knowledge, abilities and attitudes.

Learning outcomes means working with curriculum, content delivery and assessment that is determined by adult learners with support from their tutors. The programmes embed the literacy and numeracy into:

- the tools needed to prepare tamaiti/tamariki for beginning school;
- the ideas, strategies and activities that are designed to provide a good outcome for children beginning school;
- the learning about nutrition as it relates to families and children that will encourage the provision of nutritious meals for home and school;
- the skills developed to put together a balanced family budget that will support a child's on-going wellbeing;
- the ability to apply the skills, strategies, ideas and tools learnt in the programme.

### *Monitoring programme progress*

Throughout the course of the short programme, Poupou were contacted on two occasions via email and telephone to provide a progress report on the programme. During these conversations Poupou

identified the diverse methods used to recruit adult learners and the positive responses they were receiving from learners' whānau.

In some cases Poupou said they had generated high interest amongst their community networks and as a result they suggested recruiting more adult learners over and above their agreed target level. In other cases Poupou said adult learners encouraged their partners to attend the course as they could look at enrolling in a driver licence course and also gain skills to help them apply for jobs where some learners' whānau were unemployed.

Overall, Poupou were positive at both the initial and midway check-in points of this programme.

### *What did adult learners want to know and learn?*

Once adult learners were recruited and enrolled they took part in an initial interview process and in some cases engaged in whakawhanaungatanga. Whakawhanaungatanga enabled adult learners to maintain their cultural identity by which they could feel comfortable talking about their lives and the literacy and numeracy they were interested in covering. Working with adult learners to identify pre-existing knowledge helped Poupou to identify primary areas of needs and interest.

Poupou conducted brain-storming sessions, held one to one or small group sessions to elicit learners' interests and focus for the course. The majority of learners were interested in reading, maths, communication and developing effective strategies and learning tools that would assist them with supporting their children and whānau.

Poupou identified early on that some adult learners had specific interests in topics such as how to model positive behaviour, deepen knowledge about school systems and processes and learn about how to cement healthy relationships that support Whānau learning and child development. Other adult learners were interested in learning how to set goals such as financial management and attain their driver licence. While others were unsure about what to expect from the programme, they were keen to deepen their understanding about what they needed to consider as their child prepared for school.

The extent to which adult learners deepened their understanding of these issues and others was linked to addressing the literacy and numeracy embedded in these activities. The following section outlines the lessons and results obtained from adult learners' own evaluations and tutors' observations during the delivery of the 10-week programme. An analysis was conducted by looking at the main trends across all evaluation forms submitted to Literacy Aotearoa National Office.

Overall, adult learners were also interested in deepening their understanding in the following areas:

- financial management;
- modelling positive behaviour;
- nutrition;
- time management;
- effective communication strategies;
- learning strategies to assess what schools would be a good fit for their child/children.

## 5. What were the lessons in Whānau literacy and numeracy learning programmes?

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A number of key lessons were revealed from adult learners' participation in this Whānau literacy and numeracy programme. Lessons demonstrated how parents could support their preschool child'/children's transition to ECE and school through:

1. gaining confidence and increased self-awareness;
2. increased support for preparing children for Early Childhood Education, Te Kōhanga Reo and school;
3. shifting thinking: evidencing how parents valued impacts of learning literacy and numeracy;
4. positive changes in parenting styles;
5. valuing teaching and learning;
6. resourcing;
7. pursuing further education;
8. purposeful student-centred learning.

### *Gaining confidence and increased self-awareness*

Learners gained confidence in their own ability to understand text, concepts, and foundational reading, writing and mathematical skills that could be transferred into a teaching context. Some Poupou identified a high increase in parents' confidence levels as they joined a fitness group as the learner was no longer tired and grumpy.

At the same time some learners gained increased cultural knowledge beyond reading and writing as they learnt about their whakapapa, pepeha, waiata and turangawaewae. For these learners, Te Reo enabled them to express themselves culturally. Some tutors commented on how the programme helped prepare their children spiritually, physically, intellectually and emotionally which transferred into supporting the wider whānau holistically. This was achieved through such practices as karakia, waiata, korero, whakawhanaungatanga and information and story sharing. Through these cultural practices

*"learners were able to complete their workbooks with each other and in the spirit of manaakitanga."*

(Tutor)

However, as adult learners became comfortable with the tutor and process for learning, they began to gain confidence in their own abilities to make decisions for their own children.

*"I have more confidence for making a decision for my toddler and what education I want for him."*

(Adult learner)

*"I feel I can really help my children now. I was lost but now I know what to do. It feels good."*

(Adult learner)

*"I used to think I couldn't help my bubby with numbers, but I'm pretty ok." (Adult learner)*

## *Increased support for preparing children for Early Childhood Education, Te Kōhanga Reo, and school*

Poupou reported that some of their learners had preschool children who were already enrolled in Te Kōhanga Reo or ECE centres before they engaged in the Whānau LLN programme. At the same time there were a high number of learners whose children were not enrolled in Te Kōhanga Reo or an ECE centre. Some learners openly shared their initial reluctance of enrolling their child into ECE as they did not consider ECE as an option especially if they had older children. They also did not know how to help their child/children or realise that there was a process for supporting preschool children to prepare for school.

*“I thought tamariki just start school, that it would just happen...and since completing the course I see the wisdom behind preparing my child for school such as helping them to settle by becoming familiar with the environment and the initial content” (Adult learner)*

As learners gained knowledge about what to look for or what to think about when considering transitioning their child into ECE or school they presented a new-found desire to explore various ECE and school options. As a result learners said:

*“I enrolled my daughter into an ECE centre. Before I was very reluctant, because I didn’t think she needed it.” (Adult learner)*

*“I will be enrolling my son in Kōhanga.” (Adult learner)*

Tutors also reported their learners felt their knowledge had increased in terms of what they could expect from teachers at ECE and school. This knowledge encouraged a genuine interest and appreciation for their child’s education. In particular learners began valuing ECE and school content, processes and structure related to teaching and learning.

*“Being familiar with the Early Childhood framework of ‘Te Whāriki’ they are empowered with knowledge of what their preschooler should be provided with when at an ECE, which is included in the fourth work book.” (Tutor)*

*“Whakapapa boards – encourages linking to the child’s cultural context to build upon and to integrate ‘Te Whāriki’.” (Tutor)*

Parents began to understand the level and depth of information required to prepare their child for ECE and school. As well as knowing about Te Whāriki curriculum, they valued the importance of helping their children to become familiar with their new surroundings and environments.

*“[I will be] going into day-care centres with my children to see what they are all about and how children will cope in this environment.” (Adult learner)*

*“Two parents are going to enrol in ...play centre as they felt accepted and welcome.” (Tutor)*

*“I know about day care options for my children.” (Adult learner)*

One Poupou talked about activities they were carrying out with the Ministry of Education relating to the establishment of Pasifika and Maori playgroups. They advised the purpose of the play groups was to offer structured activities to assist parents and their tamariki with learning activities before they start school. Specifically, the programme includes:

*“Learning directed and taught by parents and focuses on key aspects of curriculum taught to new entrants at school.” (Tutor)*

Poupou also reported their learners had developed interest in learning, both for themselves and for their children, about what can be achieved through directed learning. For example, they learnt about strategies that would encourage structure for helping their preschool child/children prepare for ECE and school. These included setting up daily rosters, timetables, budgets and monitoring expenses that the whole whānau could follow. They began to settle in themselves, which in turn helped to settle the children. For example some learners said:

*“I now know how I can help my child get ready for school. I will be singing more, playing more, reading more and doing more with my child. Knowing I can achieve all of this in a fun way is wicked.”*  
(Adult learner)

*“I never realised my child needed to know so much on starting school.”*  
(referring to the 80 items a new entrant should know from the checklist of 5-year old skills)  
(Adult Learner)

*“Visiting the school made me more comfortable about sending my child there.” (Adult learner)*

A break through moment for one parent occurred after they had attended a meeting with other parents and discussed issues about the Kura Kaupapa. They said:

*“I can now see the importance of attending Whānau Hui at [Name of Kura Kaupapa] as that is where I can ask questions and get more of an understanding about what my tamariki are doing.” (Adult learner)*

Furthermore the Whānau literacy and numeracy course has helped parents to:

*“Teach kids to be creative, activities we got doing with our kids because it helps them with problem solving and reasoning.” (Adult learner)*

*“I have noticed a different side to my children. They have a very different way of thinking and being creative now.” (Adult learner)*

*“A lot has changed in my house since coming on this course. My child is not as tired as usual and I have put that down to taking junk food off the menu.” (Adult learner)*

### *Shifting thinking: evidencing how parents valued impacts of learning literacy and numeracy*

Through improving their own literacy and numeracy skills many learners began to shift their thinking about how to engage with their young children. For example learners were encouraged to learn through teaching and play. Activities such as baking with the children, reciting pepeha and karakia and accessing

the library and toy library enabled many learners to think about themselves as their children's first teachers.

*"I read in front of my kids now, even the newspaper-they are now copying me and pretending to read it-it makes me feel proud." (Adult learner)*

It also made parents look at their budgeting activities as well as nutritional healthy options. This was made evident when a number of parents said:

*"I really liked the low-cost cooking classes we did. It made us look at how much money we were spending and it made us discuss and compare healthy food options for school lunches." (Adult Learner)*

Learners also shared their excitement about reading to their children and the satisfaction they felt when the child interacted. They also talked about how they genuinely enjoyed reading to their child. For some parents this was not an everyday practice in their lives but since the course they are encouraging their children to think about what is happening in the story and how it makes them feel. For example one learner talked about how she encourages her children to get into character of the story and they all act out the various parts of the story.

*"Reading is fun at home, getting into character with them (children) asking them what do you think the bird is, getting them to be descriptive and imaginative." (Adult Learner).*

*"I will be using books more in the home & counting when setting the table, count how many places need to be set...helping me with baking and counting how much was needed and involve my children in everyday tasks." (Adult learner)*

Poupou explained some of their learners expressed their whakama or reluctance of learning because they were embarrassed, ashamed or shy:

*"I have gained more knowledge where before I was pretty dumbstruck and did not know what to do." (Adult learner)*

*"I didn't have the confidence to enrol before, but I can see that I could do it now, it's choice." (Adult learner)*

### *Positive changes in parenting styles*

Early on in the programme learners and tutors identified changes in learners' parenting styles that were reinforced by activities parents picked up straight away. Modelling positive behaviour by using appropriate language was one strategy an adult learner desired for her toddler. The learner shared concerns about their child's behaviour and attitude. Since the course the parent has helped develop strategies such as being in better control of her emotions, talking quietly instead of yelling and encouraging the child to stay awake in the afternoon after Kōhanga to avoid being active at night time.

These strategies and others helped to ensure smooth transition to school as the learner, child and wider whānau were adopting some good habits, such as not watching adult programmes and family members controlling their use of language in the home.

Other learners learnt how to have more patience by becoming more understanding towards their child's/children's needs, which was made evident when the television was no longer the centre of attention as learners spent more one-on-one time with their child/children.

*"I have learnt to be more patient, content and consistent with my child's upbringing as that is very important in parenting in order for my child to understand and grow." (Adult learner)*

Other strategies Poupou observed included parents genuine interest in being more active in the child's learning and development. Poupou observed adult learners praising their tamariki for good behaviour and *"were now sitting and eating together and not yelling but talking quietly"*. (Tutor)

For some adult learners learning positive strategies affirmed the good parenting practices they were already using and therefore they were able to build on from their existing knowledge base, for example parents were encouraged to learn as play rather than learning for academic purposes.

*"[We learnt] to teach kids to be creative because it helps them with problem solving and reasoning."*  
(Adult learner)

The benefits related to changes some parents made were evident when learners talked about the impact it has had on the child/children. For example one learner said:

*"A lot has changed in my house since coming on this course. My child is not as tired as usual and I have put that down to taking junk food off the menu." (Adult learner)*

*"I now know how I can help my child get ready for school. I will be singing more, playing more, reading more and doing more with my child. Knowing I can achieve all of this in a fun way is wicked."*  
(Adult learner)

### *Valuing teaching and learning*

It was noted by some tutors that all of their learners had achieved an improved result in their vocabulary assessments. For another tutor they observed the greatest success their learners achieved was when they made connections to their taha Maori through engaging in specific activities that their children would be undertaking at school. These activities include karakia and waiata for example. As the parents learnt about these subjects they were able to help continue the learning in their home. Some of the subjects included learning about the history of the region such as Tuwharetoa in Taupo. Parents valued learning about the context and history of the geographical region in which they were based, especially because this information was going to be shared with their children in the classroom once they transitioned to school.

*"It's good for us to know what our kids will be doing when they get to school, and good to be able to help them get ready for this." (Adult learner)*

It was important to the Poupou to ensure their learners took part in learning activities that were context based and relevant to their children's experience as explained by a tutor:

*“We were conscious that our whānau would be sending their preschoolers to a school that has a high percentage of Māori students (approximately 87%) and that this school focuses strongly on the development of the children’s taha Māori. With this in mind we focused on developing our whānau ability to support their tamariki entry into this school by teaching them the same things their children would learn at school.” (Tutor)*

The impetus for adult learners to participate in further learning was supported by growing experiences that they were now generating for themselves, such as valuing teaching and learning methodologies. Some learners enjoyed turning everyday tasks into teaching and learning activities as depicted in the following way:

*“I’ve never read with my kids before. I find it easy to teach through reading.” (Adult learner)*

*“Visiting the school made me more comfortable about sending my child there.” (Adult learner)*

Tutors observed adult learners gained increased awareness of the value of reading and giving and directing instruction through play. Adult learners gained a new perspective for learning and teaching as illustrated by learners who explained:

*“I take time to come to my youngest’s level and play with him and have fun instead of being serious.”  
(Adult learner)*

*“Letting the child learn through play.” (Tutor)*

## **Resourcing**

Resourcing was discussed at length by Poupou who said that while resources were important in effective transitions they were not the only solution. Often resources worked well when there was confidence about accessing positive parenting books and tools.

*“I love being creative and this programme gives me the opportunity and resources to make things for my tamariki.” (Adult learner)*

Many Poupou provided art supplies, computers for research, homemade children’s games and materials. Sewing machines and clay making were also available for learning. At the same time Poupou drew on local resources by organising trips to the local community library, toy library and other community centres where appropriate.

One Poupou explained how a learner expressed an interest in developing her own resources to help teach her children using systematic methods. As a result the learner developed strategies to help her tamariki with household chores by introducing counting and describing questions and answers. She also used waiata and karakia and repeated positive language and messages. The learner also drew on gardening as a learning tool and talked about counting, planning, planting and learning the names of various plants and vegetables.

Other adult learners talked about continuing learning opportunities such as applying to take part in a teacher aide course where the parent is able to:

*“Learn more about children and my daughter will be happy because I have a job.” (Tutor)*

Another parent wanted to learn the road code in order to obtain a licence, so they could:

*“Drive to school and meet teachers.” (Adult Learner)*

Another parent requested help for Level 4 Health Care Assistant Course to support a future for her daughter. Her mother lives with her and is able to look after her daughter while she is at the course.

### *Pursuing further education*

Many adult learners increased their self-confidence to progress into full-time training. For example one learner enrolled in a marae-based design course, while another increased her hours of work with the intention of seeking opportunities in a further skilled career. Other career options adult learners said they were keen to pursue were Social Work, Caregiving, Early Childhood Education, Teacher Aide course, Road Code, Health Care Assistant course. One Poupou advised that:

*“A learner has decided to enrol in an Early Childhood Certificate/Diploma at...as a result of the programme.” (Tutor)*

### *Developing appropriate approaches to learning*

Part of the success of the programme was based on adult learners being able to engage in flexible programmes designed to meet their goals, pre-existing knowledge abilities and focus. As adult learners gained an interest in the programme, the tutor was able to understand the learners’ situation and context which helped them to develop delivery models and learning provision that were designed to meet their specific needs.

Different aspects of learning were emphasised and valued: some students preferred cooperative learning styles opposed to competitive learning, whereas many preferred to learn through imitation, observation, trial and error rather than direct instruction. As learning styles can contribute to the alienation of students within classroom environments, these factors need to be considered when encountering various groups of adult learners.

For this programme Ngā Poupou focused on:

- the use of culturally appropriate learning methodologies and materials;
- ensuring there were culturally safe environments for all participants;
- relating learning examples to everyday life situations and contexts;
- learning provision that values the existing knowledge adult learners and their whānau bring to the learning environment;
- identifying solutions that accord with Maori values, definitions, priorities, teaching and learning styles.

### *Purposeful student-centred learning*

Part of the success of the programme was based on adult learners being able to engage in flexible programmes designed to meet their goals, pre-existing knowledge abilities and focus. As adult learners gained an interest in the programme, the tutor was able to understand the learners' situation and context which helped them to develop delivery models and learning provision that were designed to meet their needs.

Adult learners also felt comfortable because they were part of the design and delivery of the literacy programme.

## 6. Implications for this programme

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A critical component of this work revealed the complex issues associated with programme delivery and the need for advocating a cultural approach especially when adult learners experience a death in the family. For one Poupou they had met their quota of adult learners who initially signed up for the programme, but due to two tangi throughout the course the learners and their whānau had other priorities and were unable to commit to the agreed time allocated to the course.

### *Learner enrolments*

A number of Poupou expressed the importance of having more lead in time to engage, recruit and set up a new programme. The challenge for many Poupou was highlighted in the short time allowed to set up and begin the programme. The timing was a challenge because it affected the way Poupou liaised and networked with various community groups including Iwi. Often adult learners felt uncomfortable due to the rushed pace they were being encouraged to commit to the programme.

### *Learner attendance*

Some Poupou highlighted concerns around attendance which impacted on maintaining on-going commitment from adult learners. In some instances adult learners were solo parents and life issues made it difficult for them to attend on a regular basis. In other cases adult learners' attendance rates suffered due to:

- appointments made prior to joining the group;
- sickness of other children and the need to stay home with them;
- no transport;
- personal circumstances.

Poupou mitigated attendance issues through providing flexible programmes, childcare and transport where possible. In one Poupou adult learners made prior appointments that conflicted with attending the programme sessions. Rather than break those appointments to meet the classes, Poupou encouraged the learner to keep their appointments and to see it as an opportunity for managing their time more efficiently. By learning to manage their time more efficiently they would model good time management strategies to their tamariki and whānau.

In situations when adult learners other children fell sick, Poupou saw parents choosing to stay home to look after their sick child as an example of positive parenting and therefore sought ways to work around the parent where possible.

Other Poupou managed their attendance rates by providing childcare on the premises and offering transport services to adult learners and their whānau. In most cases Poupou provided adult learners and their whānau with morning tea and lunch.

## 7. Discussion

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### *What is the impact of parents' literacy learning and participation that creates significant changes in their children's early years?*

This report contends there is strong evidence to support the notion that students who are successful in ECE and school are so because their parents have been involved in their education. This programme has contributed to parents becoming more involved and genuinely interested in their preschool children's education through reading, drawing, writing, sitting, speaking, engaging and encouraging them to be themselves in a safe and supportive environment.

Poupou provided examples of working strategically to encourage parents gain literacy and numeracy skills in order to help transition their preschool children into ECE, Te Kōhanga Reo and school. Often Poupou incorporated a coordinated approach to the way that learners engaged in learning strategies such as:

- playing and exploring indoors and outdoors;
- engaging in creative and critical thinking such as big/small – tall/short pictures and photos;
- shapes;
- pasting, painting, colouring, drawing, toy making and whakapapa boards;
- reading at home and making reading interesting by getting into character with the child and getting them to be descriptive and imaginative and discussing and understanding the contents of a book.

These strategies and others helped build parents' confidence levels and encouraged them to engage in facilitating a wide range of activities they could undertake with their children in the home. These activities significantly impacted on how learners saw their own parenting style.

The results of tutor observations further demonstrated a high increase in literacy learner engagement with literacy tools and strategies in the context of communicating and working alongside their tamariki, especially when helping them prepare for ECE and school. Adult literacy learners also gained new knowledge and insight into preparing healthy meals for their tamariki. Some adult learners have done away with junk food altogether as eating healthily has proved beneficial for the entire whānau. The programme has also provided opportunities for adult literacy learners to learn new skills such as budgeting and time management.

Another key finding was the focus Poupou gave to learners who lived in densely populated Maori communities. Poupou focused strongly on assisting whānau to develop their child's/children's taha Maori as a means of supporting their entry into school. This was seen as pivotal for enabling the child to transition into school with ease, as they would have some foundational knowledge about the tikanga and associated protocols they would encounter in the classroom and the school. This directed the learning to improve the parents' abilities to support their tamariki in Te Reo and the content associated with their children's learning content at home.

In many situations throughout this Whānau literacy and numeracy programme whānau members learnt the value of learning through play. This was a significant feature of the programme, as learning to provide instruction and give and take direction in a fun manner achieves positive results for the child and parent's relationship and on-going learning.

### *Developing appropriate approaches to learning*

In some situations learning was dependent on identifying solutions that accord with Māori values, definitions, priorities, teaching and learning styles. Different aspects of learning are emphasised and valued: some students preferred cooperative learning styles as opposed to competitive learning; many others preferred to learn through imitation, observation, trial and error rather than direct instruction. As learning styles can contribute to the alienation of students within classroom environments, these factors need to be considered when encountering various groups of adult learners.

## 8. Conclusion

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This Ministry of Education Whānau Literacy and Numeracy programme has sought to achieve significant impacts in the way a small group of learners will now think and value how their preschool children transition to ECE, Te Kōhanga Reo and school. In some cases some learners who joined the programme did not enrol their children in ECE. By the time they completed the 10-week programme some of the parents enrolled their children into an ECE centre or Te Kōhanga Reo. By the end of the course other learners were considering what ECE centre they could choose to send their child/children to and felt happy about the information they gained from the course such as ECE curriculum, ECE expectation levels for the child's learning levels and processes to support their child's transition.

The success of the programme can also be attributed to a number of key factors such as parents increasing their confidence levels by becoming involved in their own literacy and numeracy learning; preschool children gaining confidence in their speech, reading, and imagination.

As a result of adult learners own successful learning they gained a more positive view of teaching and learning as well as the schooling system. Learners enjoyed learning about budgeting, health and safety, nutrition and communication skills. Beyond increasing levels of vocabulary assessments and gains in reading and maths, learners valued learning about Te Whāriki ECE curriculum and content information that would be generated in school. Learners also valued working with timetables, learning routines and compiling rosters that enabled a structured approach for preparing the child for school, which has huge benefits for their children and whānau.

This report has demonstrated the value of literacy for adult learners in this programme becomes evident when adult learners are confident in their own abilities and capabilities. Many Poupou felt that they had delivered an accessible, quality programme to whānau/caregivers of preschool children. They felt that participants made measurable progress in literacy and numeracy skills as evidenced by them taking personal ownership of how to safely grow and support their tamariki.

Beyond this programme many learners have made a commitment to interact more creatively through play and responding appropriately when engaging with their child/children. Parents evidently supported their young children when they read and sang together, sounded out words, read displays in supermarkets and were part of the adults' everyday life tasks. At the completion of this programme, many adult learners said they would continue to interact more creatively by using exciting expression while reading with their tamariki. Other learners said they would pursue further learning opportunities.

## Recommendations drawn from findings in this report

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### *Longer lead in time*

Ideally the programmes would have benefitted from a longer notice period, combined with a longer period over which to complete the tuition.

### *Programme champion*

A Whānau literacy programme champion who is well connected and known in the community, or someone within the organisation, the champion can provide for coordinating tasks and communicating effectively about the values of the programmes with others in the community. This strategy can lead to greater uptake and retention.

### *Additional resources*

A significant aspect of the programme was the development of resources by the learners themselves. These were developed to assist them with their support of their children. Any future programmes should look to provide investment in the development of whānau literacy programme resources that are relevant for the learners' own circumstances.

### *Purposeful and relevant programmes*

An important feature of these programmes is that they were learner focused. They build on the learners' strengths and are responsive to their needs. The programme would involve establishing the literacy and numeracy goals as well as the learners' life goals that would include work, further education and development of skills.

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