

Autumn Update

A Better Start – National Science Challenge

Literacy and Learning Theme

Kia ora , Welcome to our first quarterly update for the Literacy and Learning Theme of the Better Start National Science Challenge. The interconnected series of projects within this theme aim to improve the potential of young New Zealanders to have a healthy and successful life through establishing strong educational foundations and ensuring health issues that may interfere with early learning are being well managed. We are focused on facilitating learning success within our digital world including for children with emerging bilingual language development and children who enter school with identified challenges for learning. It has been a busy and exciting summer as we advance the research in collaboration with community partners. Some recent highlights are described in our update.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou, Professor Gail Gillon, Challenge Co– Director



Giving our children the best possible start to life.

E Tipu e Rea—Grow and Branch Forth

A Better Start team welcomes new Pasifika PhD student

Team members from A Better Start: E Tipu e Rea's Literacy and Learning strand were delighted to welcome their newest PhD student to the team, Saili Aukuso, in a ceremony on Friday 24th February at the Pasifika Talanoa Centre. Saili joins 4 other PhD students involved in the research. Kai-arahi Pasifika Leali'ie'e Tufulasi Taleni, and members of the University of Canterbury College of Education, Health and Human Development Pasifika Advisory Group welcomed Saili.



Some members of A Better Start at Saili's welcome

The welcoming speeches in a number of languages included from Pauline Luafutua, Acting Director of the Pacific Development

Team, and Mark Tulia, the Ministry of Education's Pasifika Coordinator South Island Region. Mark Tulia is also a member of the National Science Challenges Pasifika Advisory Group. Distinguished Professor Niki Davis, Saili's PhD supervisor and co-leader of the 'Emerging Bilinguals in a Digital World' strand explained their fit within the larger project led by Gail Gillon called 'Eke Pānui, Ake Tamaiti: Braiding health and education services to facilitate early learning success for all children.

Tufulasi **celebrates the collective sense of honour felt at the welcome:** "This event (Saili's welcome) provided a fantastic opportunity to draw in our Pasifika community and families to expose, experience and engage in the language and nature of our research activities at UC College of Education Health and Human Development. There was a collective sense of honour, respect and humility from Saili's family and the Pasifika community for such a privileged scholarship to be offered to Pasifika."



“Ole tapu'eina o le olaga ole tamaitiiti e pei o le lalagaina o le fala - e tofu le tagata masi ana aga e lalaga”

A child's life is like a mat where everyone weaves a strand



Melissa Derby *Ngāti Ranginui*,
Brownlie Scholarship awardee

Mana Māori

The UC Annual Research Symposium featured keynote presentations by Professors Gail Gillon (Literacy Project) and Angus Macfarlane (Vision Mātauranga). Their presentations drew from some of the content of a recent publication (Gillon & Macfarlane, 2017). Associate Professor Sonja Macfarlane and doctoral scholar Melissa Derby represented the Literacy Project at two important events – Te Ritorito (whānau) in Wellington and Te Mana Raraunga (data sovereignty) in Waikato. In March, we hosted the entire Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga Leadership Team on campus and discussed possible research collaborations for the future. We are pleased to report that Melissa Derby, a PhD student working on A Better Start, was awarded the UC Brownlie Scholarship. This Award is made to the highest ranked doctoral student across the University.

Mā te mōhio, ka mārama.

Through knowledge there is understanding.

A Better Start—an interdisciplinary collaboration opportunity

On Thursday 16 March 2017, an initial meeting was held with the manager of RTLB Cluster 34 (Maureen Allan) to engage the support of RTLBs in Better Start Literacy Projects – specifically in the teacher and whānau intervention workshops that are planned for Terms 2 and 3 this year. On Tuesday 21 March 2017, a follow-up hui was held for further discussions and co-construction of workshops. On Wednesday 29 March 2017, an information-sharing meeting involving several RTLB and Ministry of Education SLTs was held to explain how their professional input will support the research initiatives. We are embracing digital technologies and a successful “Zoom meeting” was held between Gail Gillon and teachers who have recently joined the project.

Intervention Update

Our research team has been very busy screening 5-6-year-old children across the seven schools within one Community of Learning, who will be participating in the *Eke Pānui, Ake Tamaiti* intervention programme. Over 250 children have been screened for early literacy and language skills, with initial results indicating approximately 58% of this group would benefit from a comprehensive investigation of their oral language and foundational literacy skills. This comprehensive assessment is due to be completed in the next few weeks, with the first group of schools set to begin intervention implementation in Term 2. Teachers, RTLBs and SLTs will attend a collaborative professional learning workshop on April 10th, to discuss the intervention, its activities and resources, and provide an opportunity for interdisciplinary collaboration between key professionals involved with children’s early literacy success—an exciting opportunity for all involved.



Recent Publications from A Better Start

Gillon, G., & Macfarlane, A. (2017). A culturally responsive framework for enhancing phonological awareness development in children with speech and language impairment, *Speech, Language and Hearing*, DOI: 10.1080/2050571X.2016.1265738

Fickel, L., Macfarlane, S., & Macfarlane, A. (2017). Culturally responsive practice for indigenous contexts: Provenance to potential. In C. Reid & J. Major (Eds.), *Global Teaching: Southern perspectives on teachers working with diversity*, (101-127). Sydney, NSW: Palgrave MacMillan. ISBN: 978-1-137-53214-5 (Print) 978-1-137-52526-0 (Online).

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