

Summer Update December 2017

A Better Start – National Science Challenge

National
SCIENCE
Challenges



Literacy and Learning Theme

Kia ora koutou,

It's been a very busy quarter for the A Better Start Literacy and Learning team, as you will read about in this Summer Update. The Literacy and Learning Symposium was a great success, attracting over 200 attendees from around New Zealand. Our two keynote speakers were outstanding, and their messages resonated with the work we are doing as part of this challenge—supporting early literacy development, and encouraging bilingual language and literacy development. The day before the symposium, over 45 researchers and stakeholders attended a successful planning workshop facilitated by Professor Robin Olds. This workshop was an opportunity to share ideas and provide feedback for the development of the research plan for tranche 2 of the A Better Start National Science Challenge, beginning in 2019. Our four projects have been very busy on the ground, with our classroom intervention coming to an end at the end of this school term; multiple publications across the projects well on track; and the development of a policy document underway. We are grateful for the ongoing support of our schools, communities and stakeholders, who are integral to the work we are undertaking.

*Have a safe Christmas and New Year period.
Ngā mihi nui, Professor Gail Gillon.*



Professor Gail Gillon, Pro-Vice Chancellor of College of Education, Health and Human Development, and A Better Start Co-Director

Literacy and Learning Symposium attracts hundreds

Over 200 researchers, educators, practitioners and students from all over New Zealand gathered at the University of Canterbury for the 2017 Literacy and Learning Symposium. Co-hosted by UC and the A Better Start National Science Challenge, this year's symposium brought together international and national researchers across fields of literacy, education, language learning, psychology, public health and speech language therapy, to highlight the exciting interdisciplinary developments in facilitating young children's literacy success and healthy wellbeing.

Several international speakers presented over the two day symposium, including Professor Laura Justice from Ohio State University, whose Day 1 keynote focused on fostering reading at home. Lynne-Harata Te Aika (Ngāi Tahu) gave the Day 2 keynote, which explored macro and micro impacts on Māori intergenerational bilingualism and literacy for Ngāi Tahu living in Te Waipounamu (South Island of New Zealand). In addition to the exciting programme of presentations, an interactive poster session on Day 1 allowed researchers and students to present related findings and participate in discussions with conference participants.



Professor Laura Justice from Ohio State University addresses the audience during her keynote on fostering reading at home.

The University of Canterbury hosts the Literacy and Learning theme of one of 11 National Science Challenges. UC has a number of leading researchers and Doctoral students involved with the study, and together with their research collaborators from the University of Otago, University of Auckland, Auckland University of Technology, Massey University, and their community partners in New Zealand, as well as their Australian research collaborators at Flinders University and Griffith University, they are involved in a series of interrelated projects to advance our knowledge of children's learning success and healthy wellbeing. The Literacy and Learning Symposium showcased a number of these research projects embedded in the Challenge. The symposium also provided our community with an exceptional opportunity to hear world-leading experts discuss critically important topics to ensure young children's learning and literacy success. We are most grateful to our international colleagues and keynote speakers for their valuable contributions to our symposium.

Presentation slides and the recordings of the keynote addresses are now available on the UC [A Better Start website](#).

Doctoral student successfully confirms research project exploring early literacy success of Pasifika children



Doctoral candidate Alice Hyun Min Kim.

Alice Hyun Min Kim has been successfully confirmed as A Better Start doctoral candidate for her research titled “Predicting early literacy success among Pasifika children aged six years in New Zealand”. She works alongside experts in Pasifika health and education in New Zealand and bilingual development. Her research involves studying the factors that impact on the academic success of Pasifika children growing up in New Zealand and using large datasets to predict their educational outcomes. Prior to commencing her PhD at the University of Canterbury, Alice studied Economics and Statistics both in New Zealand and the U.S. and worked as a consultant in a multi-national professional services firm.

As part of A Better Start project, she and her co-authors have submitted an article titled “Agreement between Pacific children, mothers and teachers on their perceptions of the children’s academic performance at age 6 years” (H. M. Kim, P. J. Schluter, B. McNeill, J. Everett, E-S. Tautolo, & G. Gillon, 2017). The article identified some important differences between how Pasifika mothers perceive their children’s academic performances and how the teachers perceive them. Further publications are in press.

Intervention data presented at international conference

Research team members from A Better Start Literacy and Learning theme travelled to Los Angeles last month to present some very hot-off-the-press data from the intervention study. The annual ASHA (American Speech Hearing Association) Convention attracts over 13,000 speech-language therapists, audiologists and researchers from around the globe, and provided an excellent audience to present the very latest intervention data from the seven participating schools. Preliminary results have demonstrated the positive impact of the intervention to accelerate the literacy development of children with lower levels of oral language. The research team looks forward to formally presenting this data back to the schools early next year, once the collection and analysis process is complete.

“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

Kaiarahi Pasifika presents Masters research findings back to community

Kaiarahi Pasifika Leali’ie’e Tufulasi Taleni presented the findings from his Master thesis back to the Pasifika community, in an event held at the Talanoa Centre in November. Supervised by Professor Angus Macfarlane, Associate Professor Sonja Macfarlane, and Associate Professor Jo Fletcher, the research, entitled ‘E saili I tautai se agava’a - A true leader masters the art of navigation’ explored the importance for school leaders to navigate changes in their leadership practices based around cultural responsiveness that leads to improving the engagement and achievement of Pasifika learners.

Several key leaders from the Pasifika community attended the event, including representatives from various Pasifika groups; Fuetanoa Kose Seinafo and Mark Tulia from the Ministry of Education; Richard Stanley from the Ministry of Pacific Peoples;

and Reverend Fitifiti Luatua. The research presented at this event provides the foundation of Tufulasi’s PhD thesis, which aims to examine how leadership is key to raising the engagement of Pasifika families and communities.



From left – John Rohs, Gary Roberts, Leali’ie’e Tufulasi Taleni, Paul Irving, Christine O’Neill, Fuetanoa Kose Seinafo

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