

Reading Together Project 2012

Analysis of feedback and of workshop attendance

Analysis and Report prepared by Fay and Ray Madden, February 2013

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Introduction

This report looks at the feedback provided by 124 schools that participated in the Ministry of Education 2012 Reading Together Project, which supported schools to implement the four workshop Reading Together programme.

While statistical analysis is included, the comments made by the participants themselves are equally illuminating. Therefore extensive use of quotes has been made throughout the report to allow the participants own voices to be heard.

The strategies demonstrated in the workshops are simple to implement, but were revelatory for the participants. One typical comment is:

I would like to thank you all for the skills that I have learnt. They have been real eye-openers and life changing for my family. It's been great to have my daughter take part in this workshop. We have all benefitted from this experience

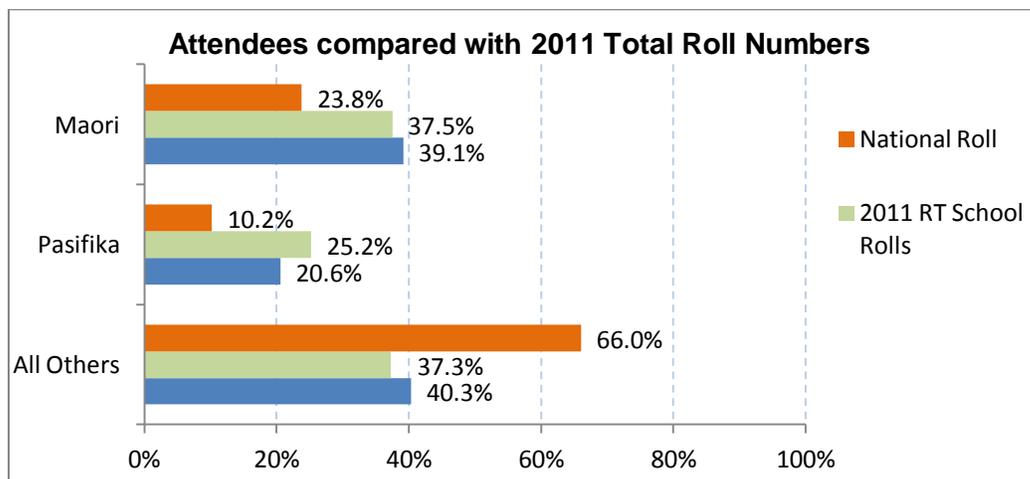
and many of the comments are poignant:

If I knew it was this simple I would have done it so different. Sorry my babies. I have a lot to make up for.

The Reading Together Project aims, by supporting schools to implement the Reading Together Programme, to lift the reading level of the long “tail” of children who are underachieving as readers, many of whom are Maori and Pasifika from underprivileged communities. The Reading Together Project therefore targeted decile 1 to 3 Primary and Intermediate schools. The proportion of Maori and Pasifika students at the schools taking part in the Reading Together programme is significantly higher than that of Year 1 to 8 students nationally. The ethnic distribution of families attending the Reading Together workshops reflects that of the participating schools.

Ethnicity	Years 1 to 8 National roll (2011) ¹	Reading Together schools total roll (2011)	Workshop participants (2012)
% NZ Maori	23.8	37.5	39.1
% Pasifika	10.2	25.2	20.6
% All other	66.0	37.3	40.3

In chart form:



¹ www.educationcounts.govt.nz

While comparative data is still being gathered for a full analysis of the impact on reading levels of the Reading Together workshops, those schools from which data has already been received are unanimously enthusiastic about the results of programme. For example, Horohoro School reports that children whose caregivers attended two or more workshops improved on average two full reading levels more than children whose parents did not participate.

Anecdotal evidence from the participants indicates that their children's enjoyment of reading blossomed along with their reading level. The programme's impact also flowed on to benefit siblings. The improvement in reading readiness of preschool brothers and sisters in particular was frequently commented upon.

[Maori male age 5's] interest level has gone from 5% to 110%! When he's bored he'll grab a book. He has started reading to his little sister. All 3 kids have benefitted from Reading Together, so thank you. Even [pre-schooler] is reading every day and [11 year old boy] no longer pulls faces or makes excuses when it's time to read. So we definitely learnt from it, so cheers 2 U! Text message from Mum after workshop 4

This programme has helped to make a difference because she has gone up 2 levels in her reading and she is more willing to read to me. The hardest part of helping my child was to have patience and expect that they will make mistakes. This programme has helped to make homework and reading more relaxed and there is more communication. It has reinforced the importance of reading and always to remember that reading is supposed to be fun.

While the majority (82%) of the workshop participants were women (mothers, grandmas and aunties), the skills learnt were passed on to male whanau members.

I was watching koro (grandad) read with our boy and I was thinking; you're doing it all wrong! You're getting angry! So I took Koro outside and had a coffee, a smoke and a chat about how to make reading fun for our boy. It was cool. I didn't want to be a big head about it but I learnt some cool stuff in just the first lesson! (Nan with full custody, after workshop 1)

The techniques learned in the workshops not only benefitted the child's reading but found application in other areas of family life.

One parent said that she had stopped pressuring her son on the sports field and was more relaxed in her approach to a variety of aspects.

Patience! Now understand how frustrated my child was (and reading at home was frustrating for us too). Now as a whanau we really enjoy reading at home. I wish I had known these techniques earlier. Love that some of the strategies can extend beyond reading and into life skills / maths and other aspects of life.

to make our one on one reading time more enjoyable which has the roll on effect and she's going to bed happier and waking happier. It's reduced a lot of stress in our home! Thank You! It just made life easier. Less tension at home, we're better friends.

The workshops were able to reach families where the caregivers themselves struggled with reading and whose own school experiences had been negative. An effort was made to remove barriers to attendance by providing food, babysitting and transport and by timing the workshops to make attendance achievable for busy parents.

We liked the Reading Workshops because there was food given to us, we didn't have to worry about that. I have no car so being picked up was good cos I could come. I think the children playing games and not being with me was good for me to learn new things.

It's good to be able to bring the kids, they enjoy coming, having soup and sausages was an excellent idea! And cake! Babysitters are appreciated, there's no reason not to attend the programme. The time works for me 5.30-6.30pm

Participants often lacked self-esteem. Several remarked on how the workshops had inspired confidence in themselves.

I loved coming to these workshops. It was fun and I think every parent should do them. I found it hard to come in the door but it has given me the confidence to enrol on a course to better myself. I wouldn't have believed I could have done this and joining this group was enough to make me realise that I could learn.

I was not liking to come because I not know people but it was nice. I am happy to see the school now and talk to some more people.

The perception of the programme's benefit was such that there was a widespread feeling that the programme should be extended to all families.

We liked the workshops. Some of our friends were asking if they can come with us because they could see the change in the boys. They asked us if all schools are doing it because they want to do it.

This programme was awesome. I wish they have given this programme when my children were in primary but this will also help me with my grandchildren and also my family now and I'm so grateful for being in it.

The comments reflected major shifts in attitude toward reading, such as

Everyone should do this programme! Breaks down the perceived attitudes about homework reading to everyday reading. Chills out expectations whether self imposed or other. The book with shapes (Brock book) needs to be given to every parent to understand their attitudes towards reading. Once this is understood they will develop their own ways for their tamariki. Pai Rawa Koutou!!!

The Reading Together programme has had a profound effect, not just in improving reading levels for a particular child but in involving entire whanau in implementing better ways of relating to their tamariki and facilitating their learning. The positive results of the programme in providing learning strategies, the provision of empathy and support for the learner, and the beneficial outcomes for the learner, whanau and community are discussed in depth in the body of this report.

Such changes are remarkable for a four workshop programme.

Methodology

The Reading Together programme consisted of a set of four workshops held at 124 decile 1 to 3 primary and intermediate schools. Up to fifteen parents participated in each set of workshops. The method of selecting participants varied from school to school. Some attended in response to advertisements in local newspapers, others from notification about the workshops in the school newsletter, while others were “shoulder tapped” by the school.

The schools provided information about the gender, ethnicity, relationship with the child, other siblings at the school, and attendance of each of the workshop participants. In addition the schools were invited to report any comments made by the participants about the Reading Together programme. This report categorises the comments in order to analyse those areas which the participants found of specific benefit.

The reporting format varied from school to school. Some reported verbal comments, others selected written comments, while others had used a questionnaire format. A few schools did not report back any comments. Because of this variation in reporting format, responses were categorized to reflect recurring themes. 2868 responses were recorded and these were almost evenly divided between four major categories. The four categories are:

- Strategies that the workshop participant found most useful (21%)
- Improvements in empathy and emotional support for the learner (27%)
- Positive outcomes for the learner (26%)
- Positive outcomes for the family/whanau/community (25%)

In order to give an in depth analysis these categories were then refined into further subcategories. Each time one of these subcategories occurred was counted as a response in that subcategory. A single comment might therefore have been counted as a response in several subcategories. For example, the comment

Reading workshop has helped me improve on helping my son to enjoy reading, being patient and encouraging to try more to have a little fun while doing reading. Has taught me to put myself in their shoes to know what it feels like not knowing words that are unfamiliar to them.

was recorded as a response in the following three subcategories

Improvements in empathy and emotional support for the learner

- Increased patience
- Recognised reading is difficult for the child

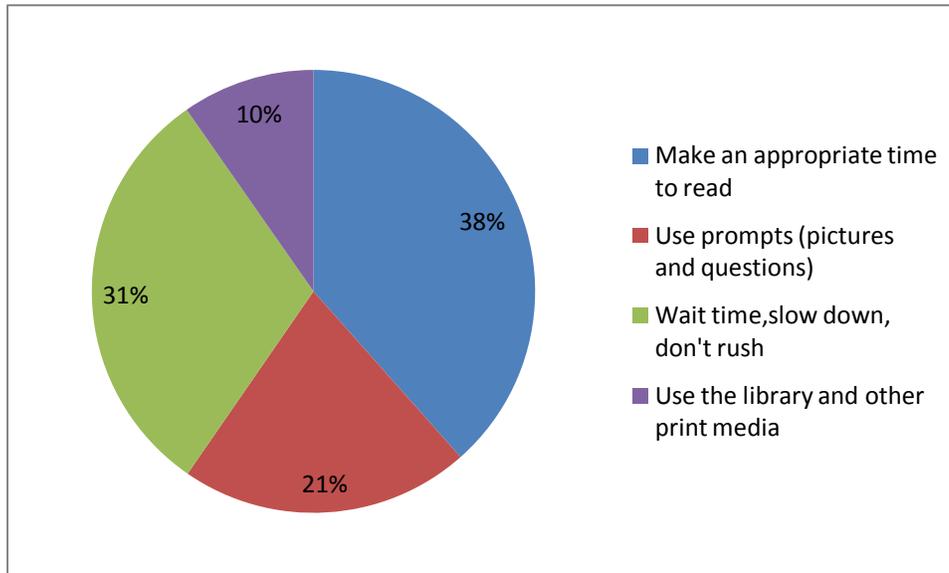
and also

Positive outcomes for the learner

- More confident, enjoying reading more

Strategies that the workshop participant found most useful

21% of the responses recorded strategies that the participant had found particularly useful. These fell into four broad subcategories as shown on the chart below.



i) Finding an appropriate and regular time to read

Making time in a busy schedule was a common difficulty remarked upon by participants as this caregiver commented:

Hardest thing is finding time on some week days around the housework, homework and cooking

Hardest part - I guess it was trying to put aside quality time where reading could be relaxed and not rushed.

Caregivers came to realize that the time chosen must also be right for the child:

We now choose a time to read that is good for my child, and it has changed reading time from a battle to a celebration. The whole family has to listen to her reading now. She likes an audience!

I let him relax after school and read when he is less tired and cranky.

After this programme we have made some changes to our children's reading times. We have reading straight after dinner and it is working very well. We have placed books, newspapers and magazines around the house. In the bedrooms, bathroom, in the car and also next to the TV.

The importance of a regular routine, free from distractions, became apparent to the participants, as reflected in these sample comments:

The programme has helped our family by helping us to remember the importance of reading. We now turn off the TV (or limit the TV) to allow reading time.

This programme helps me especially with the younger kids. It's allow me to work at home on a routine so I can have more time to spend with my children on reading.

We have a 'No TV' –Book reading night and instead of the kids dreading it, they look forward to it.

This last heartfelt comment from a mother best epitomizes the recurring theme in the comments:

Our reading atmosphere at home is SO less stressful. My patience and finding time (quality) and not while peeling the spuds, the TV blasting, it is so much more supportive. I didn't realise this is what the teacher meant.

ii) Use prompts (discussion of the story and the pictures)

Many participants realized that they had been focusing on the child reading each word correctly, so that the sense of the story was lost, along with the enjoyment of reading. As one caregiver put it:

Before the programme, I think I was limiting my child's ability to progress in reading as I only focused on them reading page by page, getting the words correct, being able to remember the words, which was not that enjoyable for me or my children.

The benefits that the changed approach brought were evident:

I learned about letting them work things out before intervening, asking questions about the story to make sure they understand. It's made a huge difference. She now seems to understand more the meanings of a story rather than just reading the words. It also helped me with my pre-schooler. I understand more about where to start. This was excellent help to understand how we all learn to read.

Yes. We have a lot more discussion about the books and how they relate in some way to our own experiences. It has brought a whole new vocab into the house. My daughter shows interest in other harder books and takes more notice of the pictures and can get a sense of what the story is about.

A number of participants spoke of their relief in realizing that they were permitted to help their learner:

We know so much more about what is helpful for the children - we know we can help if it gets too hard, we can remind them about using picture clues, we wait now instead of jumping in. We find it much easier to be patient and there is less pressure on the children

iii) Wait time, slow down, don't rush

An awareness of allowing the child time to decipher a word (wait time) went hand in hand with recognition of the importance of picture cues. In fact 7% of all responses noted this as a major change that they had made in assisting their child's reading. For example:

I think the most important thing I learnt is how important it is to wait for your child to try. I used to just jump in and tell him the words.

Hardest thing for me was learning not to tell him the words straight away, giving him time to think about the word or words and making sounds – then being able to step in and help him when he needed it.

iv) Using the library and other media

The participation of the local librarian was a highlight of the workshops for many participants. In many families visits to the library became a new found source of pleasure shared by both the caregiver and learner reader:

I have visited the Porirua Library for the first time in 20 years living here. I will come back.

He reads more. I give him little prompts and praises. We go to the library, like a little date.

It has helped me select appropriate materials for our child's skill level. Now we go to the library, we have to – the kids have their own library cards now!

The workshops also helped raise awareness that reading applies to other media, not just to books. The role of magazines, newspapers, cookbooks, comics, ebooks, the internet and even the phone book, were all commented on.

We have placed books, newspapers and magazines around the house. In the bedrooms, bathroom, in the car and also next to the TV.

Yes my son is more interested in reading from other sources and linking information learned in a book. E.g. reading a book and then going online to find out more about something talked about in the book or book topic

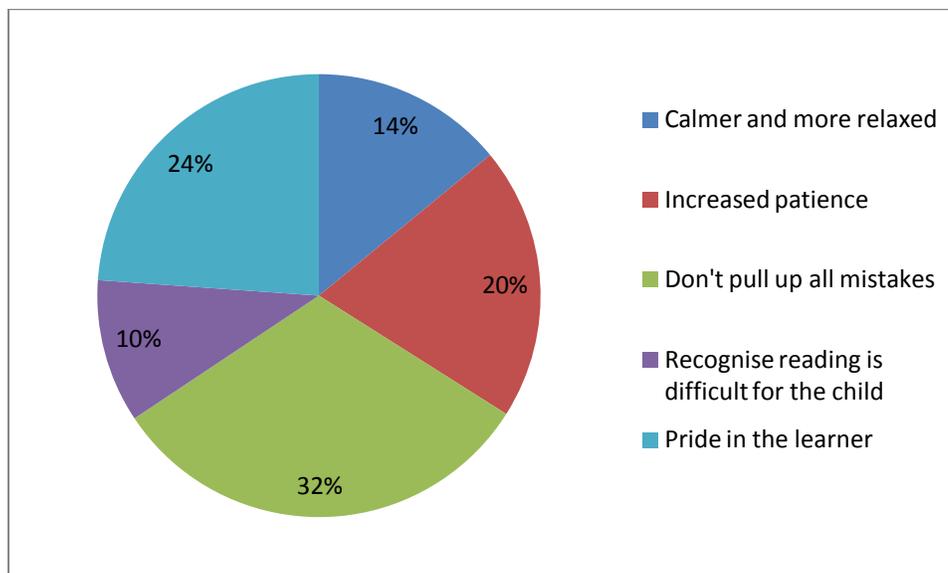
Improvements in empathy and emotional support for the learner

It was evident from the responses that many participants had previously had unrealistic expectations of the learner.

It really helped my sister to understand what its like for my nephew to read. She used to assume that because he was at school and 5 years old that that meant that he could automatically read. She has had to see the process that he goes through. She is now more patient and interested in his learning.

I need to chill, stop making it a punishment but a reward. My child is trying 20 million times harder then I realised because he's trying to break the code to please me but I'm not allowing him to do that. I need to get over myself. Thanks Reading together.

27% of the responses mentioned an improvement in the participant's empathy and emotional support for the learner. These could be grouped into the five subcategories as shown on the graph below.



i) Calmer and more relaxed atmosphere

A recurring theme in the responses was that with a calmer, more relaxed approach reading had gone from being a chore to an enjoyable activity.

I learned about relaxing; less pressure, making it fun.

I am being calm so she relaxes more and enjoys the reading. I am not jumping in and correcting the words that are said differently. It has made me realise that a lot of things are just not as important as others and spending time together to read is fun and relaxing.

My learning is to build a love of and for reading with my children. Cuddle up time instead of let's get this over with.

ii) Increased patience

The workshop participants often reported finding reading time to be a frustrating experience and venting that frustration on the child. The calmer, more relaxed approach was accompanied by increased patience on

the part of the adult. The need to be patient with the child was a major recurring thread throughout the responses.

The most important things I learn from this workshop: I calm myself down. Before I (got) angry, say 'Waste your time go school.' But now I have to be patient and enjoy reading with him. Before my son he don't like reading after this workshop he feel wanna read whenever he free.

Most of the time I gave my kids a hard time in reading. Once I tell them what to do, then that's it. This workshop, help me a lot. I learned to support them most of the time in reading. Programme helped and encouraged, not to read in the bad mood. I have to bring myself down as a kid to know their situation.

Patience – my daughter gets scared of her dad when she reads and after the tools I've learned she has more fun about reading with her dad

It was a great help. I have stopped yelling at them and have more patience. I can help them now by giving them clues.

It was recognized that improvement must be worked at:

Hardest part is patience and sometimes getting frustrated – still but getting better to disguise it

However, the spinoffs from increased patience were noted, as in this comment:

The most important thing I have learned about helping my child with reading is to have patience even when they make mistakes – always try to be positive and realise that it is ok to stop reading if you or the child is upset or struggling. This programme has helped to make a difference because she has gone up 2 levels in her reading and she is more willing to read to me. The hardest part of helping my child was to have patience and expect that they will make mistakes. This programme has helped to make homework and reading more relaxed and there is more communication. It has reinforced the importance of reading and always to remember that reading is supposed to be fun.

iii) Don't pull up every mistake

Participants also rated as important their new awareness that correcting every mistake interrupted the flow of the story and often caused the meaning of the passage to be lost.

I think I have been putting too much pressure on the boys to read and correcting them when they make mistakes. I have not given them time to correct themselves. This week I relaxed a bit and it was much more fun. The boys enjoyed their reading and I was more relaxed. They were able to make correction on their own when I let them.

Be patient, let her nut it out in her own mind or just help her to just read the word to keep the story flowing. It has been a really good relationship builder for all of us and has made reading less stressful too. We are not so focussed on getting each word right, or how long it takes us to read, we are more focussed on letting our child have an enjoyable experience.

iv) Recognised that reading is difficult for the child

Two activities in the workshops are the parents having to read the Brock book and an activity titled "Da tri ladle pegs". For many these were breakthrough exercises that brought home to parents how difficult it is for the learner reader to decode words.

I loved the workshop when we were trying to work out 'Da tri ladle Pegs'. That was so much fun working together. Long pauses, lots of animated sounds, laughter, mistakes, trying every which way, more laughter... made me realise the pauses that stress me out when listening to my kid read are exactly the pauses I was making. Oh! my god, hello, reality check.

If I didn't do this I would of still been saying to myself gee you just said that word on the other page, you should know that. The Brock book being in an unfamiliar format put me in the same situation as M, therefore giving me a better understanding of why M forgot a word or words. We were both caught up in foreign territory.

I really enjoyed reading "Brock". It takes us back to being 5 and now I know what it is like to have to learn everything. I think we forget how much children are having to learn and remember. I have been way too hard on my kid. I am now praising them for the things they can do rather than the things they can't because they probably haven't learnt that bit yet.

v) Pride in the learner and shared enjoyment

A significant number of participants remarked on the effectiveness of giving praise and reassurance to the learner reader. One participant remarked poignantly:

I've learned not to give the word too soon, but to let them try it themselves. Praise for their attempts, even if it is not right, they have tried. My son thanked me when I praised him. He smiled.

Other participants also remarked on a new awareness of the importance of praise:

The programme help me a lot at home by reading together with my child and not be angry when my child don't know the words in the book, I have to praise the child when reading like – 'well done, good girl, etc'

To make it interesting and fun, not a chore This was really good for me, to see what I was doing was probably frustrating the child as well. Pausing longer for them to get it themselves, then giving them lots of praise. It's good

Reading changed from a source of conflict to became a positive time of shared enjoyment:

I'm more positive and confident about helping and I think that makes it a nicer experience for both of us, it's our special time together and we both enjoy reading more now.

We are enjoying our reading together so much more now than we did before I had done the workshop programme, because of having that knowledge that I didn't have before, and not rushing a story. Enjoying the stories together and having mum there to listen, she loves that most of all.

I am more aware that reading can just be for enjoyment. Less fights, I'm enjoying reading with and to them.

Several participants remarked on the feelings of pride in themselves and their children that the child's success engendered:

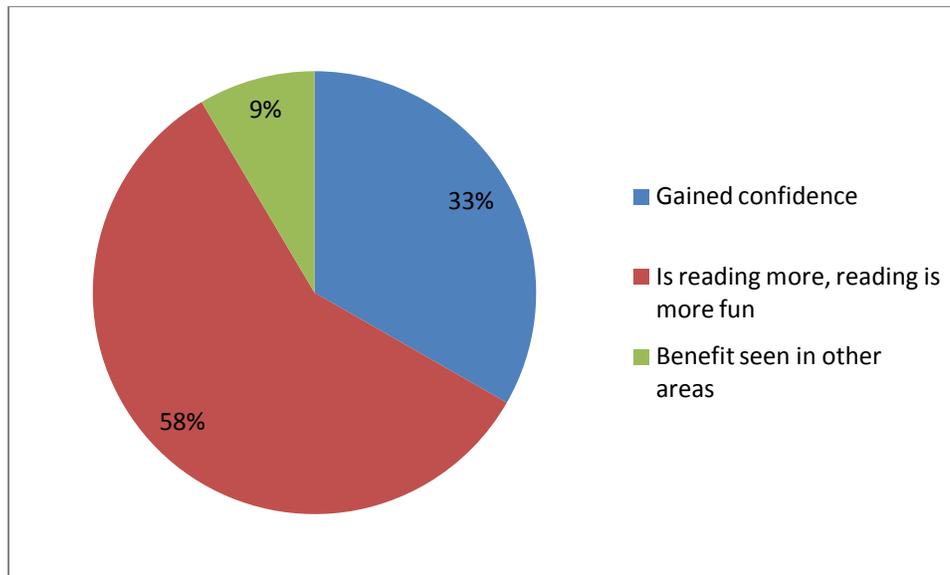
I am really proud of my children when they get it!

My children and my partner now read more often. There's a big difference in his confidence in sharing ideas about certain books, it's quite amazing. Makes me proud being a mum

Positive outcomes for the learner

26% of the total responses mentioned specific positive outcomes for the learner. The chart below indicates the broad subcategories these responses fell into. As shown, the learners became more confident and relaxed and, as a result, they began reading more. Reading came to be regarded as a pleasurable activity for both caregiver and child. One participant summed up the benefit of Reading Together in these words:

My child enjoys reading now and I do too. He read the book by himself the other day and I'm not sure who was the most happy. I could kick myself for not reading this way years ago.



i) The learner is more confident

The caregivers' more relaxed attitude and better understanding of the learning process was reflected in the children themselves becoming more confident in their reading. Many of the caregiver comments remarked that reading had become fun since the Reading Together workshops.

I've learnt a better way to read with my children and how I can approach them with reading. They didn't enjoy it at first but love reading now. Learnt how to choose the correct book for their levels, how to make reading more enjoyable and to let the small mistakes slide which helped their confidence.

Because we are more confident and relaxed the children's confidence has grown. We have fun at reading time now and the stress has gone.

He was anti and thought it was too hard, so I didn't want to do it either. We've both changed.

My daughter now seems more relaxed and this has made reading fun again as we tend not to rush it. We now spend more time reading the book together. We make it more of a family occasion instead of just trying to fit it in.

A few of the schools recorded comments from the children themselves. These provided an indication that the children had noticed the difference made by participation in the Reading Together workshops, reporting

feelings of increased confidence and a new association of reading with loving, fun times. In some of the children's own words:

Mum reads with me more now. It's really fun.

It is important because we can understand a lot more about each other

When I read with my mum I feel confident because if there is a word I don't know my mum helps me, so it's not like a reading test.

It is important to read and spend time with your mum cause love grows.

When you are reading together with you mum it safe, happy, very good.

I have enjoyed reading with my mum. She helps me with words I don't know. It helps me extend my vocabulary. I learn new words. It is very exciting and cool.

Nan tries to read with me more. She doesn't always just tell me the word now

I get to choose really fun books and go to the library every week.

ii) The learner is reading more

An outcome of the children's increase in confidence was that they began to read for pleasure. The frequency of their reading subsequently increased.

My boy is now so enthusiastic, he is wanting to do reading in the afternoon or evening before I've even suggested it!

Tom is now enjoying reading – he even wanted to take a book into Mimi's (Grandma) place to read to her to show off his reading skills. Sit down and make the time to read/listen. It was good to meet some of the other parents at the course.

One night he read 5 chapters. He did not want to stop because he was really interested in the book about dinosaurs. He never reads that much.

Other caregivers also noted an improvement in their child's reading level.

My daughter is so proud to see me at school and learning to help her. She has made such fast progress over the last 5 weeks.

He is up a level in class. He is reading Roald Dahl and loves it. He is bringing a lot more books home.

My daughter jumped up 2 levels, is trying to read more and is reading to younger brother. The focus and encouragement has helped us all.

Reading is a much happier and relaxed time in our household and we have noticed his ability to read improving all the time

iii) Benefitting other areas

The benefit of the workshops was not confined to reading. Many participants found that what they learned in the workshops could be applied in other areas:

We can apply the same tricks to lots of areas. Get involved and excited and they do too.

I think Dylan's attitude has changed towards his learning in general and hopefully will continue. All 3 enjoy having books to read to them at the end of an evening.

Importantly, some noted that home-life in general improved as a result of the better understanding of the child's needs learned in the workshops:

We are more aware of each other when we talk (we listen /don't interrupt), we are all more patient with whatever we do. Great programme!

We spend more quality time together now.

To make our one on one reading time more enjoyable which has the roll on effect and she's going to bed happier and waking happier. It's reduced a lot of stress in our home! Thank You! It just made life easier. Less tension at home, we're better friends.

My child has learnt when achieving tasks i.e. reading/spelling – good feelings go with it and rewards and the want to do better

Positive outcomes for the family/whanau/community

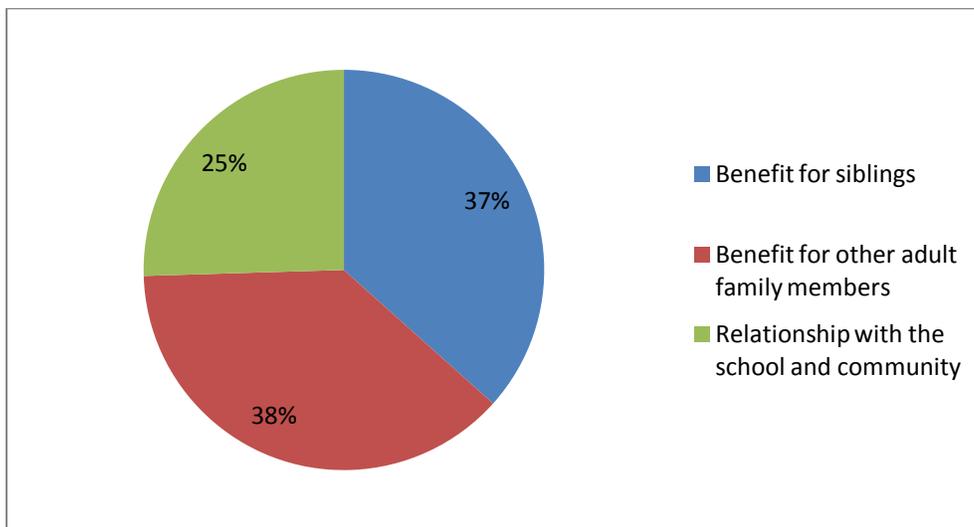
While the participants had primarily attended the workshops in order to benefit one particular child, positive outcomes extended to siblings and other whanau members, especially Dads and Granddads. For example:

Dad is more involved now and the kids really enjoy him taking part. Our 3 year old is taking more interest in books

25% of the reported responses focused on how the benefit of the workshop had flowed through to other whanau members and in improved relationships with the school and wider community.

This programme is helping me, helping my husband and all our kids. Continue on doing this please.

The following chart shows the three main areas of benefit that participants commented upon.



In addition, 14% of all responses commented upon community reaction to the workshops.

i) Benefit for siblings

52% of the workshop participants are noted as having more than one child at the school. In addition, many had preschool children. These other siblings benefitted along with the child whose reading progress had prompted attendance at the workshops.

When I first came into the programme it was mainly for one child but it has opened up the door for the other children. Has helped my reading relationship with my children.

Everyone is keen to read at home! Kyson loves helping his siblings read now too.

This included older children:

It's funny how I came for my little one but my big boy [year 6] is liking reading heaps more and has a better attitude since I've been reading with him more. (Mum after workshop 3)

My family get involved more at reading time and enjoy it. My 16 year old helps too.

My teen is trying to be more involved in reading to the little ones and listening to them read. We will now be joining the library and coming as a family weekly.

Pre-schoolers appeared to benefit particularly, as their reading readiness developed from imitation and sharing books with older siblings:

My pre-schooler wants me to get books for her to read now! I got some from the teacher and she has a bookbag and everything. Hahaha. (Mum after workshop 3)

The programme has helped all of the children at home. The younger sibling is copying and showing an interest in books and reading that I never saw with the other kids.

This has been cool fun! I like that we always finish reading on a happy note now! My kids are now sharing books with their younger siblings.

ii) Benefit for other adult family/whanau members

Over all the workshops, 82% of the participants were female. This lack of male participation was noted. As one kuia put it:

Ok! Ladies our next mission is to get our dad's on board. Bring it on 2013. Kia Kaha!

It was very definitely recognized that male role modelling is important, particularly for boys,

It's really important for fathers to come and to read with their kids at home. It is a good way to build a good relationship with your kids. I think it's important for boys to see their dad's reading and being involved in their reading.

and favourable comment was passed (by the women!) when males did participate in the workshops:

This programme was a great help, thoroughly enjoyed it – even their father enjoyed it when he came.

My partner's understanding of what I have to do has changed. He is beginning to see how important this is. He is more patient when reading with our daughter.

While the males who participated in the workshops were very much a minority, participants were able to pass on their new knowledge to the non-participant male members of the whanau.

It helped Dad to get involved. I was able to show him what to do.

It has helped with my son's dad helping him understand just how frustrating it is for the child. After every workshop I would go home and let him know what I had learned.

I have taken home material to share with my husband and other family members. I now know to encourage children to look at the pictures and consider the context of the story.

The knowledge of new strategies was on occasion disseminated widely:

It really helped my sister to understand what its like for my nephew to read.

We have no children, but even in relationship with a neighbor (the workshops are of benefit). He continues to talk with me about his reading along with his whanau. It shows the value of everyone

role modelling and sharing an interest and what it does in children's lives. I gave him a book to say thank you. He wrote a letter etc.

That the improvement in attitude to reading extended over the entire whanau was remarked upon:

We read together as a family more than I did with my children. My granddaughters are a big improvement to their parents.

It has made reading a positive and awesome time. The whole whanau is now included in her reading.

iii) Relationship with the school and community

The moral support and fellowship provided by the workshops was frequently commented upon. Participants expressed a sense of relief that other families were experiencing similar difficulties to them.

It was good to meet in supportative group with other parents and hear different people's struggles, strategies, etc.

I recommend this programme to everyone. It's a good place for support, and catching up with other parents, finding out what problems they have and a time for sharing, and also fantastic that we could take our children with us. It was a relief to know that other parents were having the same issues that I was.

Absolutely!! I think simply seeing that we are not the "only" family struggling with teaching children to read was good. Also hearing other ways of dealing with different issues helps.

Participants found that the workshops contributed to a better relationship with the school:

I was not liking to come because I not know people but it was nice. I am happy to see the school now and talk to some more people.

I am a lot more interested and wanting to be more part of the school and learn more about what the school is doing

It was good I could bring my children/husband to interact and see us parents being involved with school. Great job done.

iv) Community reaction to the workshops

In order to succeed in engaging the participants, the Reading Together workshops had to provide a relaxed, non-judgmental atmosphere for participants who, in many cases, felt ill-at-ease in dealing with the school and whose own reading experiences had been negative.

The friendly informality of the workshops appealed to the participants. Facilitators made a significant effort to prevent constraints such as lack of transport, the need to fit in with working hours and family demands from precluding any caregivers from participating in the workshops. Provision of childcare was appreciated and many remarked on the good kai provided! The timing of the workshops was flexible, with some being held immediately after school when the caregiver was already at school to collect their children, or more often at around 5:30 so that a parent could attend after work.

Very helpful having a meal – so much easier to organise around family.

Timing is good (2:00pm) as it is just before we pick up the kids. Great afternoon teas.

The timing of the workshops was great, not having to do tea and being able to come straight down after work - if it was straight after school the children would be too tired. It is good for them to have a break

Participants often lacked self-esteem. Several remarked on how the workshops had inspired confidence in themselves.

I loved coming to these workshops. It was fun and I think every parent should do them. I found it hard to come in the door but it has given me the confidence to enrol on a course to better myself. I wouldn't have believed I could have done this and joining this group was enough to make me realise that I could learn.

It has made me more confident in myself, which is helping me to help my children.

The workshops had a flow on effect on adult literacy with caregivers' increased awareness of the value of adult role modelling. Many of the parents who attended the workshops were either struggling or reluctant readers themselves:

I struggled through my childhood with reading. I find it hard to read to my son because I can't read. I used the picture books we were given and we talk about the story.

This programme has encouraged me and my husband to read, not only with our son's reading book, but we are starting to like reading.

I read more. Why should he read when I don't so I show him – so I've started reading more and I like it.

or speakers of English as a second language:

Really helped my child also myself and my family to know more English words and to know more words

My daughter is teaching me how to read in English.

It is hard for me with English as second language, but I want to help my kids so I need to come to every meeting to show them that I care.

A common comment was that participants wished that the workshops had been offered sooner.

Every parent should have to do this programme when their kids start school.

If I had have done these workshops when my kids were younger I may have had more fun reading with them at home.

I think it is great how the school has picked up on these children that just need that extra little boost and given it to them, at school and home, through this course. Thank you very much. I wish this was available when my eldest son was at Intermediate.

The participants expressed the hope that other families would also be offered the opportunity to attend workshops in order to experience the same benefits that they have.

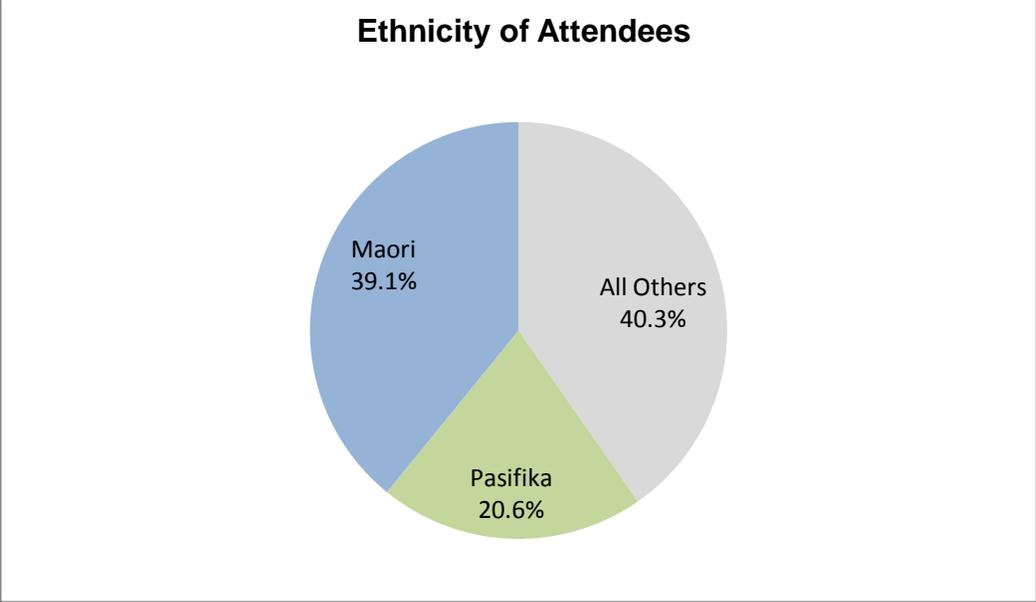
I know of other family members in the school who can't read very well and I think it would be of benefit to them.

I think these are a series of workshops that should be offered across all levels of the school because there is something in it for everybody.

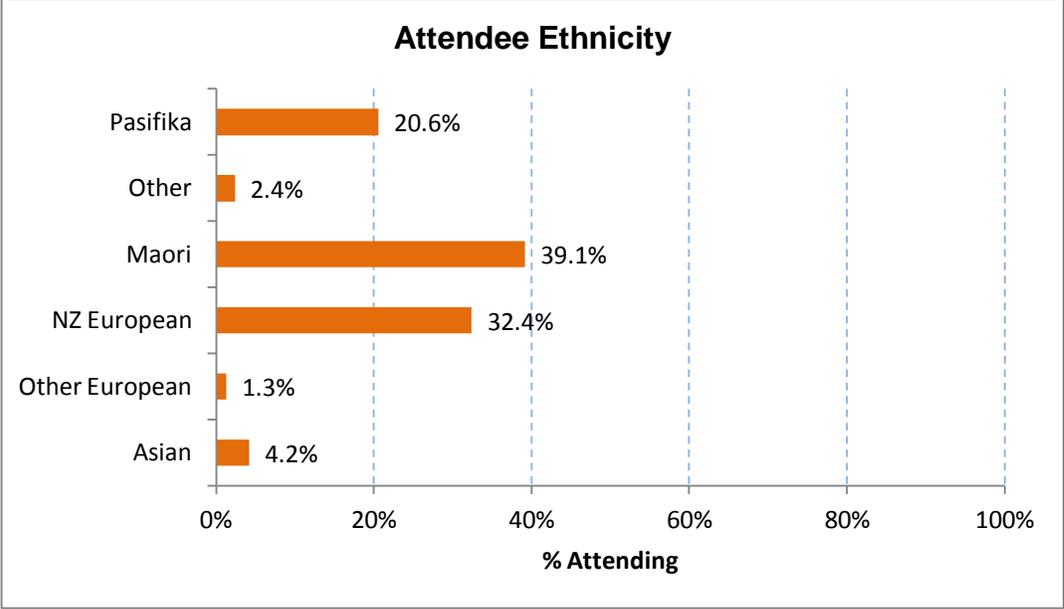
It was awesome to see my sons confidence grow. All parents should have this opportunity

Gender and Ethnicity analysis of the workshop participants

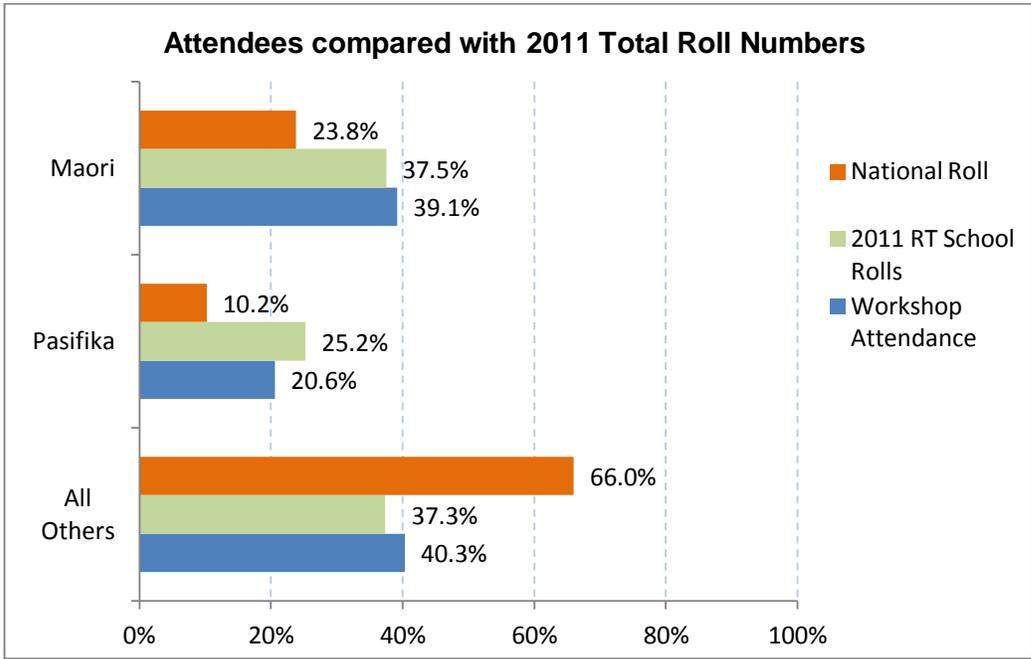
New Zealand Maori was the dominant ethnicity of the workshop participants at 39.1%, with Pasifika making up 20.6%. All other ethnicities made up the remaining 40.3%, with New Zealand European contributing 32.4% of this group.



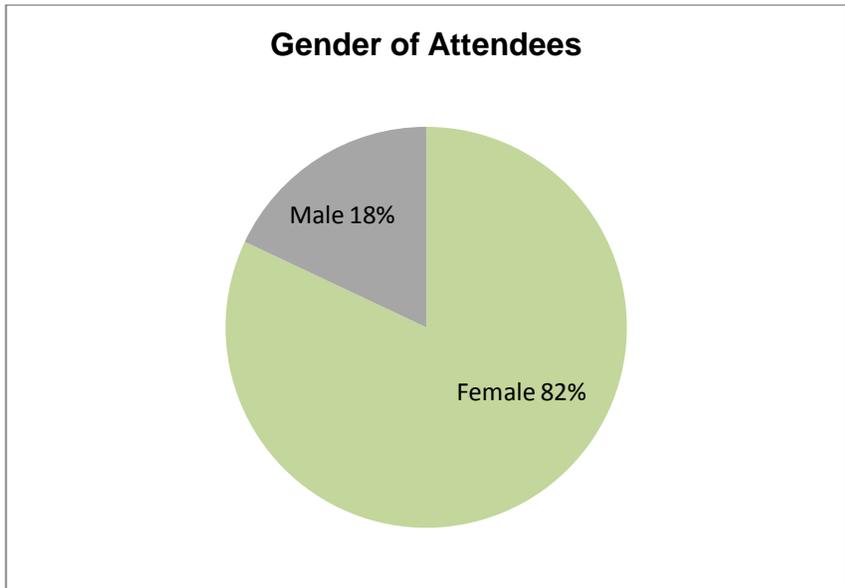
On closer analysis:



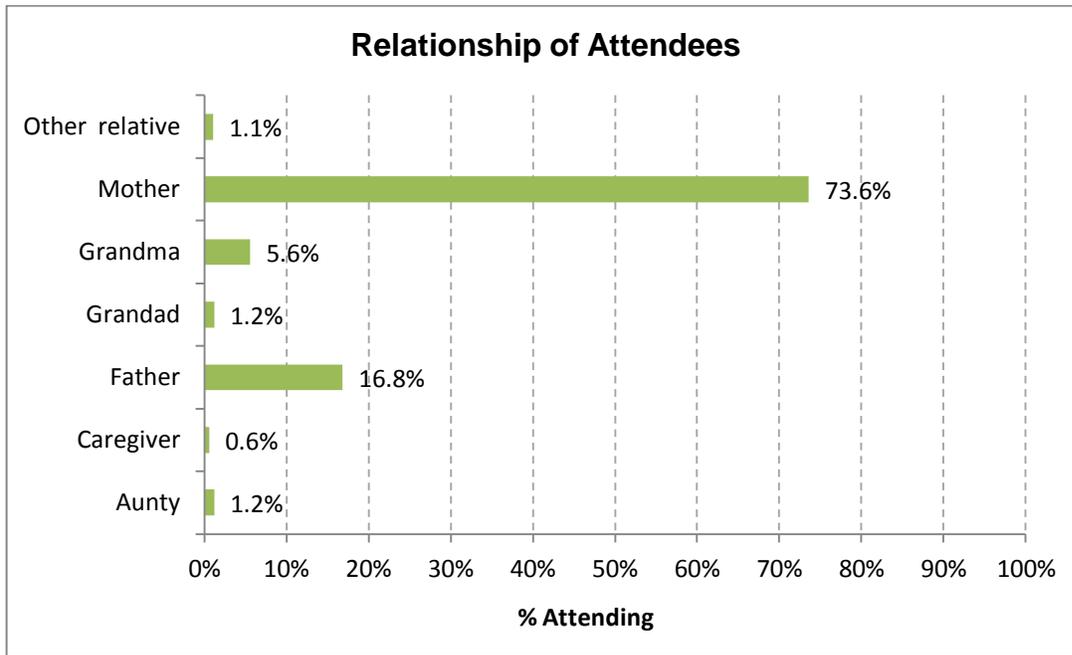
As was noted in the introduction, the workshops are succeeding in targeting Maori and Pasifika students, as the decile 1 to 3 school rolls contain a higher proportion of these students than attend Years 1 to 8 at schools nationally, as shown by the following chart:



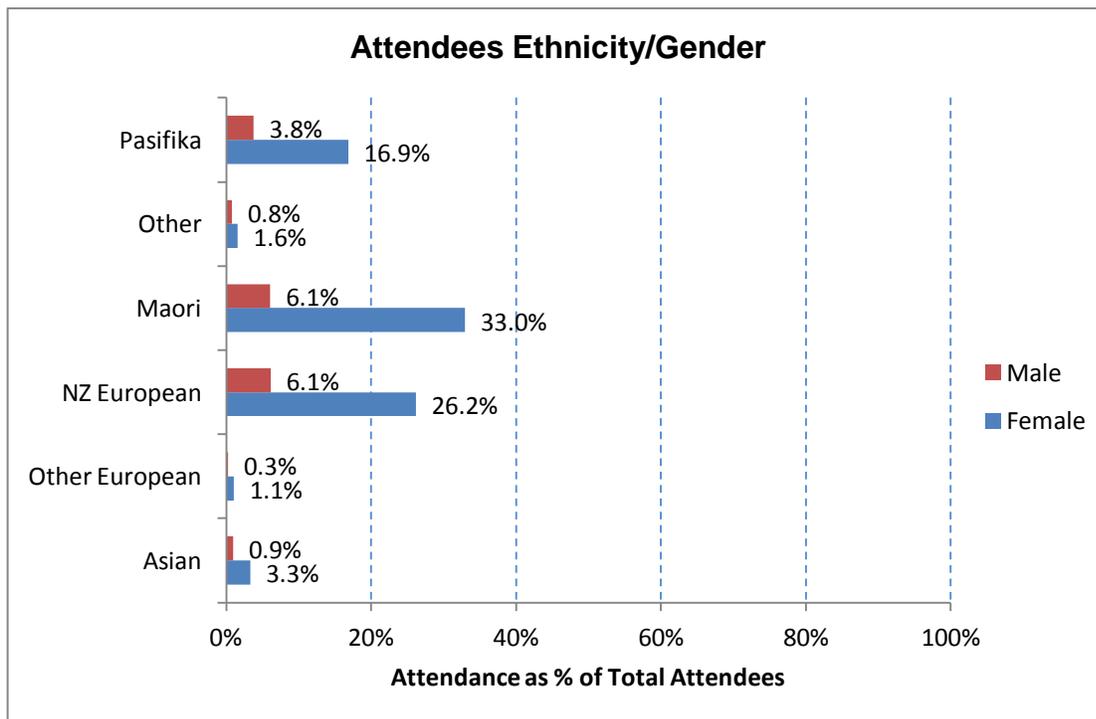
Gender analysis showed that the workshop participants were predominantly female at 82%:



and when the workshop participant's relationship with the learner is analysed, as would be expected, mothers make up the major proportion at 73.6%.



When the participants are analysed by gender and ethnicity, it can be seen that Maori females make up a third of all workshop participants, followed by NZ European and Pasifika females. While male participation is low overall, Maori and NZ European males are participating at a higher percentage than are males of other ethnicities. However, the ratio of male to female participants is approximately 1:5 for each ethnicity.



Summary

- The workshops succeeded in targeting Maori and Pasifika students
39.1% of the caregivers attending the workshops were New Zealand Maori and 20.6% were Pasifika.
- Feedback from schools and participants is uniformly enthusiastic and records dramatic improvement in reading levels and the enthusiasm of the learner for reading. The whole family became involved, and siblings also benefitted.

My daughter jumped up 2 levels, is trying to read more and is reading to younger brother. The focus and encouragement has helped us all. More focus on books and library books for both children. Excellent course! Loved it! Thank you! And the childcare facility made it do-able.

- The participants gained new strategies to facilitate learning

The workshops made caregivers aware of how difficult it is for children to learn to read. Many had previously had unrealistic expectations of the learner so that reading was stressful for all concerned

The participants were shown new ways to approach their child's reading.

A whole new approach from me and yes it is going to take time but I'm sure I can do it. Reading is going to be different tonight. (at workshop 1)

The workshops demonstrated techniques such as such as setting aside a regular time for reading free from other distractions, discussing the story and using picture cues to help the reader, allowing "wait time" to give the reader time to decipher the words themselves, and not correcting every mistake word by word so that the story flows.

The most important thing I have learned about helping my child with reading is to be patient with my child's reading and to support and encourage him when he makes a mistake. This programme has helped to make a difference because he loves to read with me more now and he is keen to correct himself with his mistakes. The hardest part of helping my child was some of the words are hard but he tries ... After the workshops he is very keen to read with me and he is not afraid to make a mistake because my attitude has changed towards his reading. I recommend this workshop should be run again to benefit other parents.

- Relationships within the whanau improved

Before attending the workshops most participants had found reading with their children a stressful and frustrating experience for both the adult and child. This response is typical:

I like this because it helped me understand better on how to read with my child. If I did not come to the workshop my relationship with my daughter while reading would still be very uncomfortable and was always an angry time for us.

Consequently the learners began reading more. Positive spinoffs were noted in other areas of school and family life, as participants realized that the concepts and techniques taught in the workshops were also applicable to areas other than reading.

The programme helped my family with communication and spending more time together. I think it has been a really beneficial programme and I hope other parents do this course should it happen again.

This programme has given our family direction. Excellent work, great stuff!

The participants shared the strategies with whanau. While male participation in the workshops was low (18%), the female participants passed the workshop strategies on to male whanau members.

This programme is helping me, helping my husband and all our kids. Continue on doing this please.

Nevertheless, a general feeling prevailed that it would be of great benefit if fathers did attend the workshops.

Ok! Ladies our next mission is to get our dad's on board. Bring it on 2013. Kia Kaha!

- The participants gained confidence in themselves

The non-judgmental, relaxed format of the workshops was widely appreciated, as were the efforts to make attendance feasible by providing food and transport. Participants found that attending the workshops and sharing experiences with other families raised their confidence levels.

It makes me feel better, listening to how other parents also struggle with reading and their stories. I am very glad that it was said that we have to let the teachers, be the teachers, and it was their job to teach them to read, and at home I could just be the parent and enjoy that time with them.

Many reported that reading not only became enjoyable for the learner but was a new source of enjoyment for themselves as well.

This programme has encouraged me and my husband to read, not only with our son's reading book, but we are starting to like reading.

I was very excited about coming to the town library, because I have not been here before.

- The sentiment that the opportunity to attend the workshops should be extended was widespread.

I think these are a series of workshops that should be offered across all levels of the school because there is something in it for everybody.

It was awesome to see my sons confidence grow. All parents should have this opportunity.