



WESTLAND HIGH SCHOOL

Te Kura Tuarua o Hokitika

EXPERIENCE SUCCESS TOGETHER
PIKI KOTAHI KI TE TAUMATA

Rising Rangatahi Final Review

26/11/2024

Attn: Te Rau Puawai Education Trust

Introduction and Rationale

Rising Rangatahi is a programme that was created by Westland High School Learning Support to address disengagement amongst some of our most at risk learners. The programme consists of tailored structured literacy courses, as well as social skill and resilience building courses utilising trained [Rock and Water](#) facilitators.

A big part of this project was aimed at addressing inequalities and to enhance learning outcomes for Maori, Pasifika, neurodiverse, and learning support students. Many of the rangatahi involved in our programme have experienced disengagement in our school system leading to gaps in literacy and learning, low self-esteem, and detachment from their own academic potential. Many have struggled or are currently struggling to meet NCEA requirements for literacy attainment via the new co-requisite standards. *Our aim is to meet students where they are at, and guide students to fill gaps in their own skill sets.*

Sustainability

To ensure the sustainability of this programme into the future, we chose to upskill and train our own in-house learning support staff who quickly became specialists in the areas of literacy support and social skills/resilience training. We now have 2 fully qualified Structured Literacy staff and 2 fully qualified Rock and Water facilitators. With the government's recent announcement to make structured literacy mandatory at the primary level, and also the government's goals to increase attendance and engagement, we feel we are well aligned with nation-wide education goals.

Identifying participants

At the onset of this programme, we identified 2 groups of focus students. Group 1 consisted of 43 year 9 and 10 students that were at risk of not meeting NCEA literacy requirements to pass high school. 35% of these students identified as Maori, 15% neurodiverse, and 100% of students were on our learning support register. 31% of these students attended school less than 80% of the time.

Group 2 consisted of 17 year 11 students that had been unsuccessful in meeting NCEA literacy requirements (CAA literacy test). 19% of these students identified as Maori, 25% neurodiverse, and 100% were on our learning support register. 56% of these students attended school less than 80% of the time.

Measuring outcomes

We decided to look at a few different measures to track success of our rangatahi. Below is the schedule of testing and review.

Pre-term 1

Attendance Data

Term 1

The Code testing (spelling)

BURT testing (reading)

End Term 2, 2024

The Code testing (spelling)

BURT testing (reading)

Student feedback via online questionnaire

Attendance Data

Term 4, 2024

Group 1:

The Code testing (spelling)

BURT testing (reading)

Group 2:

% of successful CAA exams passed

Attendance Data (both groups)

Academic results

In the end, of the 60 total participants who began this intervention, at the mid-year mark 4 were very inconsistent due to attendance issues and were not participating very often,

2 had left the school, and 2 chose not to participate near the start of the programme. This took our participant list to 52 at the mid-year mark. Since mid-year, of these 52 students a further 6 students have disengaged from the programme or left school completely. This brings our end of year list of programme participants to 46. It's important to mention that although these disengaged students did not reap full benefits of the programme, the ones we were able to re-test at the mid-year mark were all showing improvements both in reading and spelling.

Term 4 academic results

Group 1: As of term 4, 2024, this group consisted of 31 year 9 and 10 students. Based on the BURT reading tests, comparing February to November 2024, 90% of participants saw increases in their overall reading score. Of those students, 19% increased their equivalent reading age by 6 months, 32% increased their reading age by 1 year, 19% increased their reading age by 1.5 years, and 1 student managed to increase their reading age by over 2 years! That means 54% of students were able to increase their reading age by a year or more in just 10 months. These results are especially significant, as this is a group of students that are often disengaged due to their specific learning challenges, and thus historically have found it difficult to make gains with literacy. Based on the Code spelling tests, since the beginning of the programme 81% of students have increased or significantly increased the amount of words they now spell correctly, and 16% of students were able to jump a whole spelling level. A great confidence boosting outcome for some of our lower literacy students.

Group 2: Consisted of 17 year 11 students that had not yet been successful at meeting requirements for NCEA literacy. Since mid-year, 2 of these students have left taking the group to 15. It was decided that there was too much pressure on these students to put through another 2 rounds of testing for BURT and the CODE, considering it is overlapping with the time of their final exam preparation and writing. It was felt that since the goal for this group was passing the CAA exams and/or attaining their NCEA literacy, that the best measure of success (besides attendance) was if they had attained their literacy qualification.

CAA literacy exams are broken down into 2 tests: Comprehension and Writing. As a result of the first round of CAA testing at mid year, 5 of 15 students had successfully achieved on the reading comprehension exam, and 1 had achieved on the writing exam. The final results for remaining students will be in by mid December, at which time I will send an email update to Te Rau Puawai Education Trust with final numbers for your interest. These 6 students were exceptionally proud of their achievements, and so were we!

Attendance Comparisons

Another important goal we set at the onset of this intervention was to increase attendance as an indicator of engagement, with a specific target of having 90% of our intervention students attending school 80% or more of the time. The initial benchmark for attendance was taken in September of 2023 when we identified our participants for this intervention. At that time, 67% of target students were attending school 80% or more of the time. Fastforward to June 2024, 73% of those same students are attending school 80% or more of the time, which was a 6% increase at the mid-year mark.

Attendance Term 4

Group 1: I'm pleased to report that 30 out of 31 students had an attendance rate of 80% or higher. This means that we exceeded our goal 90% of our intervention students attending school 80% or more of the time with this group.

Group 2: Of these 15 students, 14 were attending school over 80% of the time, and in fact 13 of them were attending over 90% of the time! This means that with regards to this subset of intervention students, we exceeded our goal of 90% of our intervention students attending school 80% or more of the time.

Possible contributing factors

It is to be noted that while our programme no doubt has some impact on these attendance figures, other factors such as minimum attendance requirements to attend the school ball, as well as final exam tutorials, most likely had an impact on this group's attendance. Another factor might be that at this time of year, whanau teachers are chasing up teachers, students, and their whanau for information to ensure that our school records are accurate with regards to attendance reporting. As such, they will have updated school records to reflect the most accurate attendance data. This can improve overall attendance data as a result.

Facilitator feedback

Programme facilitators reported that they felt students showed consistent gains in confidence around literacy, as well as social resilience and a sense of belonging. Literacy facilitators felt that most of the time, students were engaged and valued the programme, and they saw consistent skill improvement over the course of the programme. They reported having a number of year 9 students expressing that they would love continued support like this into year 10, as some are feeling quite nervous about having to write the CAA literacy exams in 2025. All facilitators felt that with some tweaks, this would be a very beneficial programme to continue into the future.

Positive unintended impacts of the intervention

As reported by our HOD English: “Note on the Year 11s: we utilised TAs who had built relationships with students via the structured literacy sessions as Exam support, and at times for Achievement Standards internal assessments, as well as supervisors for the CAA testing. This proved to be an unexpected benefit that enabled those students to feel supported in a trusted environment. Year 11s had an alternate pathway of achieving their Literacy CAA via specific achievement standards. Support from structured literacy TAs and the relationships built during this programme, may have helped students to achieve in these standards.”

Results will be out for the CAA test mid December, and Achievement Standards mid January 2025.

Identified Challenges

Some of the identified challenges by our facilitators were the occurrences of schoolwide activities and presentations which impacted some of the sessions, timetable shifts and changes due to staffing challenges and other factors, and the absenteeism of some students as mentioned above. Because of our facilitator’s ability to be flexible and adaptable, as well as teacher willingness to support students, we were often able to make up time lost due to these constraints.

After the mid year mark, we experienced an emotional set back as a beloved student in our department passed away suddenly. One of our structured literacy facilitators also decided to move on to another employment opportunity, so some of the continuity was lost there. We were able to hire and train a new facilitator, but new relationships needed to be built, so this perhaps had some impact on outcomes for some of our students.

Conclusion

We are so proud of all of our rangatahi and facilitators for their hard work this year. We look forward to reviewing these results and feedback as a team, and creating a continuation plan into 2025. Thank you very much to Te Rau Puawai Education Trust for your financial support in this endeavor. It was such a wonderful learning experience that no doubt contributed to our student’s experiences of success and belonging at school.