

Reading Together®
Te Pānui Ngātahi

Summary of evaluations and implementation exemplars

Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis (BES)
Hei Kete Raukura Report



J Oakden & K Spee. Pragmatica Limited.
April 2022

Report Information

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Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi

With your food basket and my food basket the people will thrive

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Photo credit front page: Participants from Reading Together® Te Pānui Ngātahi: St Joseph's School Otahuhu. Best evidence in action implementation exemplar (Ministry of Education, 2018a). Photo: David Copeland.

Disclaimer: We developed this report in good faith using the information available to us at the time. We provide it on the basis that the authors of the report are not liable to any person or organisation for any damage or loss which may occur from acting or not acting with respect to any information or advice within this report.

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Highlights

*Reading
Together® supports
**transformative
change** within weeks
for parents and
whānau*



Highlights

Introduction

The Reading Together® programme, Te Pānui Ngātahi, (Reading Together®) is a research-based, four-session workshop programme that supports parents and whānau to effectively raise their children's reading achievement.

Robinson, Hohepa, and Lloyd (2009) observe that the workshops' design helps parents and whānau:

- “develop an understanding of the reading process and how children learn to read
- learn useful strategies to support their children's reading at home
- reflect on and discuss their experiences [of supporting their children] ...
- access and select reading material at the right level for their children from school and local libraries” (p. 162).

The programme also creates educational learning partnerships by combining the strengths of both whānau and school (Robinson et al., 2009). As well as “teaching parents' specific skills, the process seeks to foster collaborative and non-threatening partnerships between parents, teachers, children and libraries” (Tuck, Horgan, Franich, & Wards, 2007, p. 3). In this way, Reading Together® supports teachers to teach reading.

Report purpose

To support the coming expansion of Reading Together® in the future (2022 onwards) this action-oriented research summary describes ways schools implemented the programme effectively, including some challenges they overcame. It also examines the support Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga | Ministry of Education (the Ministry) provided to schools in their implementation from 2007–2020.

Audience

This summary provides principals, senior leadership teams, workshop facilitators and teachers with insights from other schools on implementing Reading Together® and the expected benefits. It helps the Ministry operations teams and policymakers understand what works, how it works and the policy implications.

Data

The report synthesises data from research, formal evaluations, implementation exemplars and analysis conducted by the Ministry of Reading Together® delivery in schools since 2004, as well as earlier research.

Methods

The analysis of the research reports uses an evidence-based policy approach coupled with a Māori potential approach and systems-thinking framing.

Why is Reading Together® needed?

Children from Aotearoa New Zealand are falling behind other countries in literacy measures (PIRLS, 2016). There is an ongoing lack of equity in student outcomes, particularly for Māori and Pacific children. However, doing nothing is not an option (Alton-Lee, 2016): schools need effective ways to address the decline in reading.

*Children from Aotearoa New Zealand are **falling behind** other countries in literacy measures*

Key findings

Reading Together® is a proven programme that has a high impact on parents, children, school leadership, teachers, and the wider community (Robinson et al., 2009). From participating in Reading Together® multiple valued outcomes occur for children, parents and whānau as well as for school and library communities.

Parents and whānau

Reading Together® supports transformative change within weeks for parents and whānau, including Māori and Pacific whānau (Biddulph, 1983, 1993; Ministry of Education, 2018a, 2018b, 2019). Changes that consistently occur for parents and whānau from attending the Reading Together® sessions are they:

- increase their knowledge and understand how children learn to read
- learn new strategies and tools
- become more confident supporting their children to learn to read
- reprioritise learning at home and create a safe and settled space for reading
- experience improved social wellbeing and connection with their children
- start accessing new reading material that is of interest to their children
- have improved parent-teacher and parent-school relationships
- engage more in the learning agenda of the school.

***Reprioritise learning at home** and create a safe and settled space for reading*

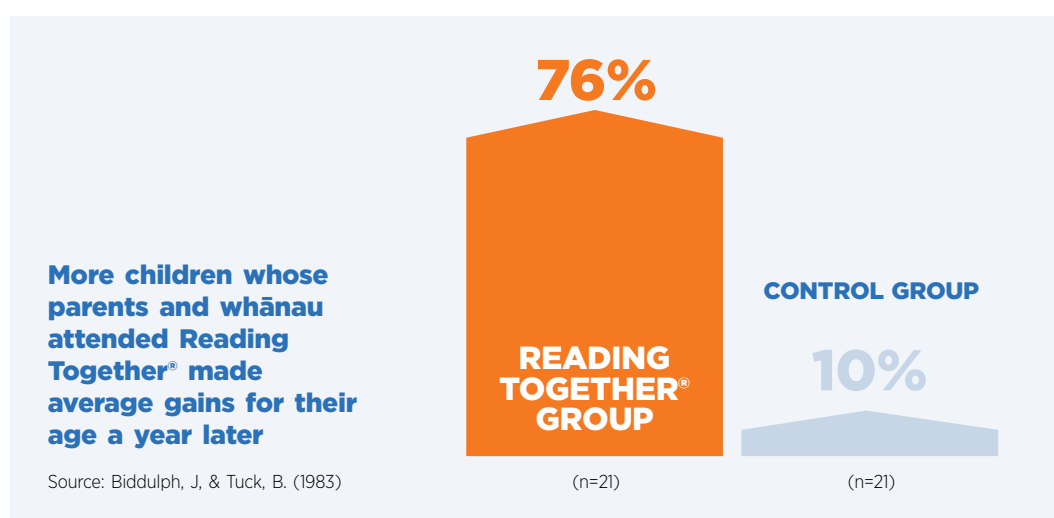
Across many studies, parents and whānau said after attending Reading Together® they felt less stressed and found reading with their children more enjoyable. The new patterns established encouraged better parent-child relationships, changed the family dynamics and transformed the way parents and whānau engaged with schools (Biddulph, 1983; Madden & Madden, 2015b). In some cases, parents and whānau also started participating more in wider community settings because of the confidence gained from attending the programme (Ministry of Education, 2018a).

Children and siblings

When implemented well, the Reading Together® programme accelerated a child's reading by more than a year compared with a control group (Biddulph & Tuck, 1983; Tuck et al., 2007; Madden & Madden, 2015a).



In many instances, as the next graph shows, children whose parents or whānau attended the programme had not necessarily caught up with their age group, but they were no longer falling further behind. By contrast, all but two children in the control group fell further behind their age cohort (Biddulph & Tuck, 1983). Research showed siblings also experience similar gains in reading. These reading gains were lasting (Alton-Lee, 2016).



Parent and teacher observations of behaviour change also indicated social and wellbeing benefits for children from the Reading Together® programme that were consistent and considerable. These included:

- improved relationships with parents and whānau
- positive changes in children's attitudes and feelings towards reading
- increased engagement in reading
- improved engagement in school as confidence builds (Biddulph, 1983; Alton-Lee, 2016).

Changes for the community

For Māori and Pacific communities, successful delivery of Reading Together® resulted in changes in partnerships between the school and the community and iwi (Madden & Madden, 2014a; Ministry of Education, 2018b, 2019; Oakden, 2021; Robinson et al., 2009; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009). In schools like St Joseph's Otahuhu, the programme ran for 16 years, involving the Pacific community. The programme was successful for Māori and Pacific parents and students when schools:

- took the time to build successful high-trust partnerships
- were committed to sharing leadership
- recognised that culturally and linguistically responsive practice made a positive difference to programme delivery
- engaged with whānau in affirming, welcoming and respectful ways that were culturally responsive
- were willing to embrace ways of being and doing that are comfortable for partners
- offered a platform for teachers, school leaders, iwi, hapū, marae and churches to support learning to read with cultural awareness and cultural responsiveness.

Senior leadership in schools

When led by the school's senior leadership team, Reading Together® encouraged connections between home and school that were powerful in making a difference for the education of children (Robinson et al., 2009). Well planned implementation supported strong home-school connections to develop in a range of school settings (Ministry of Education 2018a, 2018b), including marae and other community settings (Ministry of Education, 2019). Principals played a key role in building relational trust. When relational trust was present, school staff developed a shared commitment to the programme. They also won the confidence and commitment of the participating parents (Tuck et al., 2007; Ministry of Education, 2019).

*Principals played a key role in building relational **trust***

Teachers

When teachers were allies, the resulting joined-up approach to programme delivery benefited parents, whānau and children. The programme's deep literacy pedagogy provided strong professional development support for teachers to strengthen their understanding of literacy (Alton-Lee, 2016). It is notable that the teacher's union, New Zealand Educational Institute Te Rui Roa supports Reading Together®, observing it as "the nearest thing New Zealand education has to a silver bullet" (Blaikie, 2016, para. 2).

Librarians

Librarians support Reading Together®: they found it helped them build relationships with parents, whānau and children and encourage the family's reading (Ministry of Education, 2018a). In some instances, librarians strengthened the cultural responsiveness of their collections, for example, including more relatable books for Māori (Alton-Lee, 2021, personal communication).

*Librarians strengthened the **cultural responsiveness** of their collections*

What works and doesn't work for effective implementation of Reading Together® in schools

Some educators justifiably fear that “programmes” will not bring about needed change (Tuck et al., 2007). Reading Together® is different because its development has been informed by long-term research.

Alton-Lee (2016) remarks, “school leaders... have reported that the intervention is worth their investment of time because of impact” (p. 69). When done well, lasting gains in reading can occur quickly within a school. Many studies show that effective implementation of Reading Together®, can lead to a depth and sustainability of school change (Alton-Lee, 2016, Ministry of Education, 2018a, 2018b, 2019, Tuck et al., 2007).

For depth of implementation, principals and senior leaders:

- **used a strengths-based approach** to launch and run the programme, valuing the expertise of all school staff, and parents and whānau
- **took a whole-school approach** to introducing, planning and running Reading Together®, with clear roles and responsibilities for many on the staff
- **built strong relationships** with parents and whānau in their school community to remove any barriers to participation. For instance, a warm, culturally responsive invitation to attend Reading Together® was critical to the programme's success. As was engaging, connecting, and running the workshops in an enjoyable and non-judgmental way for parents and whānau. When leaders ensured the programme was run well, parents and whānau enjoyed attending and did not drop out.

For sustainability of implementation, principals and senior leaders:

- **use the Reading Together® smart tools** (Robinson et al., 2009, p. 44) to support delivering the core parts of the programme with fidelity while using the teaching team's relational skills to support learning and change
- **use robust data management systems** to build Reading Together® into the business-as-usual operation of the school, rather than running it as a separate or ad hoc programme
- **resource adequately** in terms of time, funding and support to set up and run the programme well.

When implemented with fidelity and culturally responsively, Reading Together® is one way schools can quickly raise children's reading achievement. However, poor implementation may result in parents and whānau not engaging enough with Reading Together® to get the expected measurable gains in children's reading ability (Evaluation Associates, 2010; McNaughton et al., 2012).

Therefore, for the outcome of equity, it is critical to monitor implementation and whānau participation and drop-out rates so that changes can be made to ensure Māori and Pacific learners do not miss out on the benefits. Otherwise, the benefits of Reading Together® might bypass Māori and Pacific and the most disadvantaged. It is also vital to measure student reading achievement regularly, without negative labelling, to ensure the programme works as expected.

Systems opportunities and challenges to effectively leverage Reading Together®

The research findings suggest Reading Together® should be part of core service delivery in schools and not at risk of being dropped each time there are substantive policy changes.

Reading Together® is a valuable and proven programme the Ministry should continue to champion as a core part of its support to schools and communities (Alton-Lee, 2016). Reading Together® appears to support schools and whānau to build relational trust and whānau engagement in their children's learning, integrating well with other policy initiatives within the Ministry. Therefore, the Ministry has a role in supporting the future expansion (2022 onwards) of Reading Together® (Alton-Lee, 2016; Oakden, 2021).

There is an opportunity for different teams within the Ministry to better connect over Reading Together®. In the past various teams within the Ministry have supported and advocated for the programme (Oakden, 2021, Oakden & Wehipeihana, 2010; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009). However, the programme appears to be undervalued within the wider Ministry. Otherwise, it would be championed more broadly than it currently is (Oakden, 2021).

Support for Reading Together® needs to be consistent and sustained to embed the Programme based on implementation learnings from 2007–2020. Reading Together® has the potential to be an important means for the Ministry to help schools achieve equity for Māori and Pacific children (Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009; Wehipeihana, 2019).

The Ministry needs to plan and work differently to encourage a “shift in reform ownership” (Coburn, 2003) to schools. In planning Ministry support of the scale out of Reading Together® it is suggested policymakers:

- prioritise the programme and allow schools three to five years to embed it into their systems so successful implementation is possible
- resource a skilled programme implementation team for the duration of the project
- address equity by working in partnership with communities, using a Māori potential approach giving effect to Te Tiriti and Tino Rangatiratanga through a genuine partnership with Māori
- identify and support schools most in need of assistance
- provide additional support to schools to collect useable student achievement data
- track implementation to ensure scale out is on track and genuinely addresses equity issues for Māori and Pacific children.

The Ministry implementation team has the potential to work as a system coordinator. In this role, they could build infrastructure and networks such as:

- securing input from experienced facilitators of Reading Together® with strong school networks
- developing an online portal to support ongoing programme implementation.

Provision of this infrastructure would help build and maintain the capability in schools and encourage connections within the Ministry.



*Support
for Reading
Together® needs to
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sustained to **embed
the programme***

Background and introduction

*The programme
also creates
**educational learning
partnerships** by
combining the strengths
of both whānau and
school*



Background and introduction

Context

Reading Together® is a research-based, four-session workshop programme that provides support for parents and whānau to effectively raise children's reading achievement. Robinson et al. (2009) observe that the workshops' design helps parents and whānau:

- “develop an understanding of the reading process and how children learn to read
- learn useful strategies to support their children's reading at home
- reflect on and discuss their experiences [supporting their children]
- access and select reading material at the right level for their children from school and local libraries” (p. 162).

The programme also creates educational learning partnerships by combining the strengths of both whānau and school (Robinson et al., 2009). As well as “teaching parents' specific skills, the process seeks to foster collaborative and non-threatening partnerships between parents, teachers, children and libraries” (Tuck, et al., 2007, p. 3). In this way, Reading Together® supports teachers to teach reading.

As already noted, Reading Together® entails schools running four one-and-a-quarter-hour workshops over seven weeks to a group of parents and whānau. At the second workshop, a child attends with parents and whānau to try some of the suggested ideas. The facilitator also helps parents and whānau link with the local community library, enabling parents and whānau to access more reading resources.

Since 2007, the Ministry of Education has supported schools to run Reading Together®. More recently, the Ministry extended Reading Together® into community settings, which has proved to be a valuable addition to the offering (Oakden, 2021). An alternative version of Reading Together® is also running successfully with parents in prisons (Woodley, 2018; Woodley, 2021). However, this report focuses on delivering Reading Together® in school settings.

As part of a broader initiative to address the decline in reading in Aotearoa New Zealand, the Ministry of Education received \$11.6m in the 2021 budget to expand Reading Together® and Duffy Books in Homes. The funding aims to “improve literacy and wellbeing outcomes for over 73,000 children across New Zealand by giving 37,000 parents effective strategies to support their children as they learn to read” (Ministry of Education, 2021b).



*Ministry of
Education received
\$11.6m in the 2021
budget to expand
Reading Together®
and Duffy Books
in Homes*

Research objectives

Because of the planned expansion of Reading Together® in schools, the Ministry contracted Pragmatica to develop an action-oriented research summary. This summary incorporates the key findings from 38 years of research and evaluation to guide the effective implementation of the programme going forward. It includes reports, evaluations, and administrative data sets. The objectives of this action-oriented summary are to describe in school settings:

- the outcomes for all the key stakeholders engaged in Reading Together®
- what works and how it works for effective implementation of Reading Together®
- the system challenges and opportunities of implementing Reading Together®.

Research methodology

This research draws on a whole system approach based on the Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) methodology (Alton-Lee, 2004a). The BES Programme's key questions are: what does and does not work in education? and what makes a bigger difference? how and why? The focus is always on practice that brings valued outcomes for children (Alton-Lee, 2012). The research is framed through strategies identified in the Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) as good practice in school leadership (Robinson et al., 2009) and teacher professional development (Timperley et al., 2007). In addition, BES prioritises equity, excellence, belonging and wellbeing with priority for Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi).

The research drew on a wide range of existing information as data, including:

- existing Best Evidence Synthesis findings that relate to the Reading Together® programme (six reports) and best evidence in action exemplars (three features on Education Counts)
- early literature that informed the original design of the Reading Together® programme (three reports)
- published and unpublished research or evaluation reports about Reading Together® (14 reports)
- administrative data and internal Ministry reports about the implementation and uptake of Reading Together®
- personal communication with key Ministry staff involved in scaling Reading Together® in the past.

Research reports and literature were provided by the Ministry. The researchers first analysed the individual reports and administrative data for this research. Next, they entered key data into a mixed-methods analysis software programme. The researchers then used a contextualist thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84) to draw out key themes. The different data types were then synthesised and mapped against the BES framing. An internal Ministry of Education team who have had a deep involvement with Reading Together® over many years, worked in a participatory way with the researchers. This action-oriented report was then peer reviewed. For more information on the research method, please [see page 75](#).

Limitations of this research

The research scope did not include a new literature review. Still, it drew on key literature that has informed implementation and scale up in the past. No further data was collected to develop this action-oriented summary. This review focussed on Reading Together® offered in schools and out of scope of this review were:

- Early Reading Together®
- the business model of the Reading Together® programme creator.

Why is Reading Together[®] needed?

*Children
from Aotearoa
New Zealand are
**well behind other
countries***



Why is Reading Together® needed?

Last century Aotearoa New Zealand was a world leader in reading literacy (Alton-Lee, 2004b). This is no longer the case: now, children from Aotearoa New Zealand are well behind other countries we would have thought of as our peers. There is also an ongoing lack of equity in student outcomes, particularly for Māori and Pacific children (Alton-Lee, 2016). However, doing nothing is not an option as Aotearoa New Zealand falls further behind in the OECD reading achievement rankings.

Schools need effective ways to address this decline in reading. As reported in the *Best Evidence Synthesis (BES): Effectiveness Report: Iteration 18* (Alton-Lee, 2016) there is a need to:

- improve reading achievement results
- improve equality of student outcomes
- support and inform parents and whānau to counter the negative effects of un-informed help with their children's reading homework
- build educationally powerful connections and culturally responsive relationships between schools and parents and whānau and communities to support positive learner outcomes
- strengthen teacher practice in reading
- support the Ministry's use of high-impact programmes in schools.

Schools
need effective
ways to **address**
the decline in
reading

Each of these points is examined more closely in the following sections.

Need to improve reading achievement

In the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) data Aotearoa New Zealand's 2016 mean score of 525 was significantly lower than the means for 29 other countries (Ministry of Education, 2017a). Those countries included OECD countries Ireland, Finland, United States, England, Northern Ireland, Australia and Canada.

The PIRLS 2011 to 2016 data showed Aotearoa New Zealand experienced a small but significant decline of eight points in reading achievement and slipped in the country rankings.

Changes in
mean reading
achievement
for the English-
language
countries from
PIRLS 2011 to
PIRLS 2016

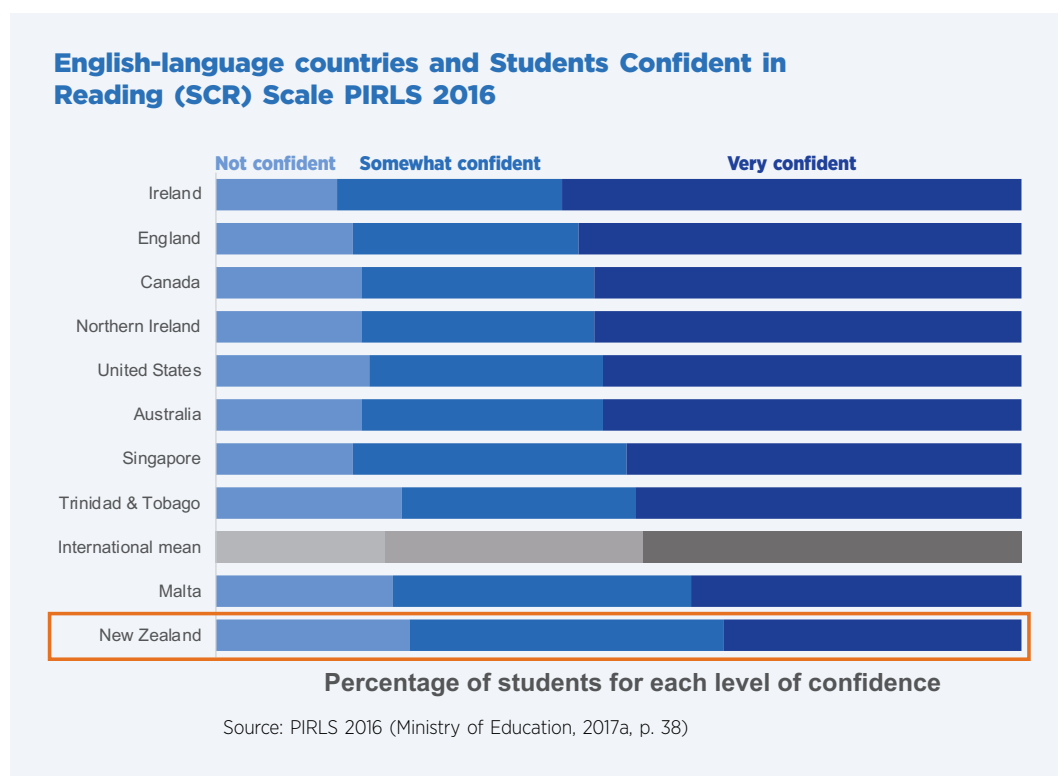
Country	Difference between means scores PIRLS 2011 and 2016	Was the change significant?	
Australia	17	^	Change significantly higher
Ireland	15	^	
England	7	^	
Singapore	9	-	Not statistically different
Trinidad & Tobago	9	-	
Northern Ireland	6	-	
Malta	-5	v	Change significantly lower
Canada	-5	v	
United States	-7	v	
New Zealand	-8	v	

Source: PIRLS 2016 (Ministry of Education, 2017a, p. 11)

The decline reported for Aotearoa New Zealand in PIRLS 2016 occurred across all groups:

- the lower-performing children (in the lowest quarter) achieved lower scores
- the higher-achieving children (in the highest quarter) performed at a slightly lower level
- fewer children achieved the “high” benchmark (41%).

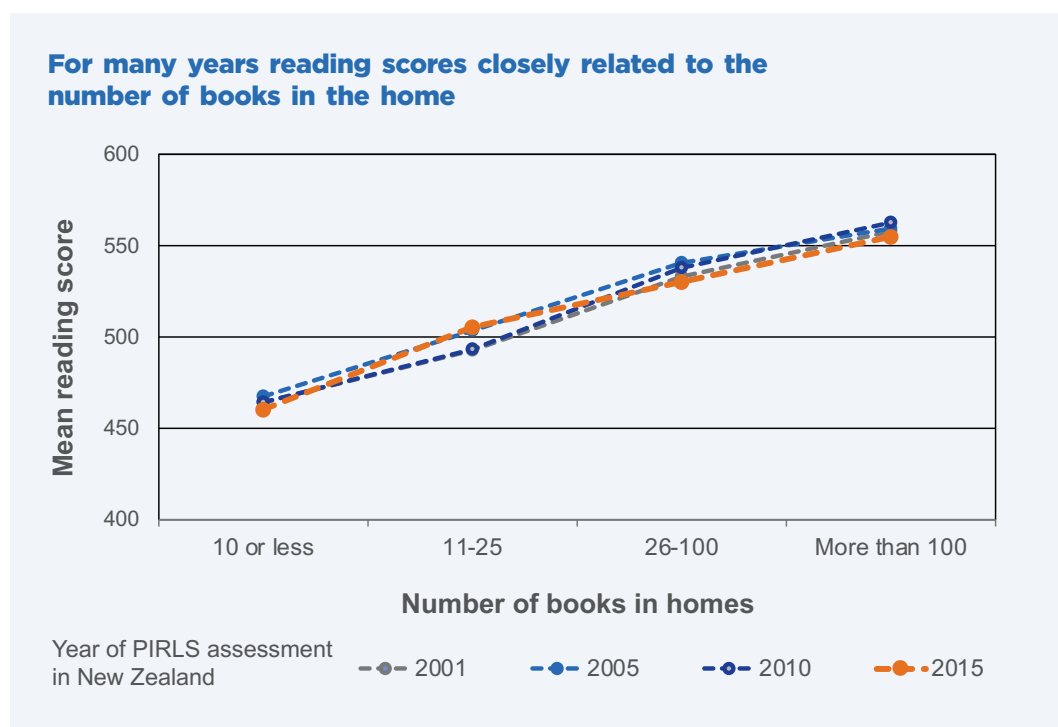
Children of Aotearoa New Zealand were much less confident in reading than their international peers. This is important because children who lack confidence score about 120 score points lower, on average, than those who are very confident (Ministry of Education, 2017a).



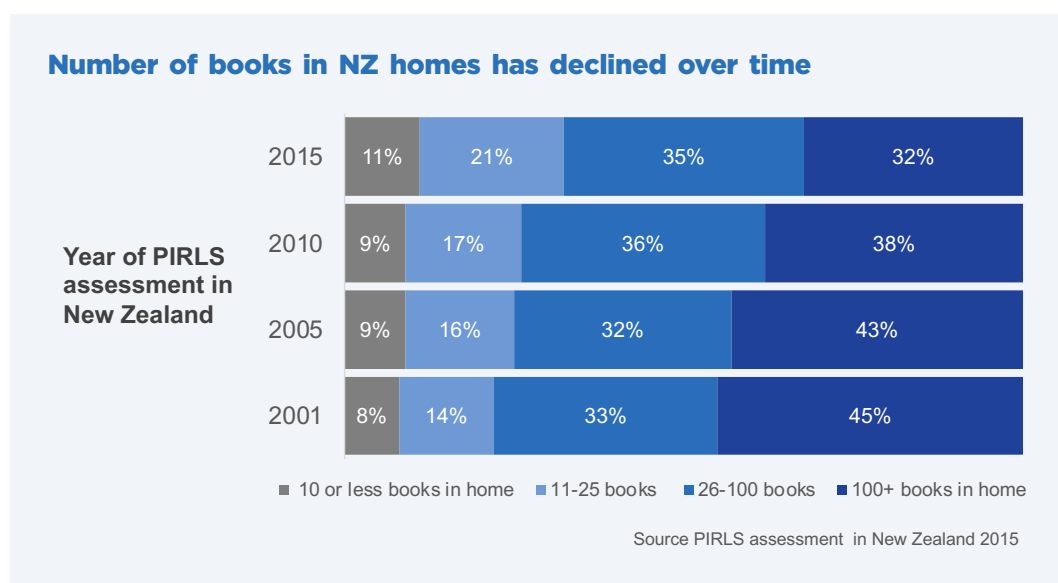
Need to improve equity of outcomes for Māori and Pacific children

There is also a need to improve equity of outcomes for Māori and Pacific children. For example, the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results (2010) found that Aotearoa New Zealand had the largest reading score point difference associated with socio-economic status. For Māori and Pacific children, national monitoring results continue to show an effect for ethnicity over and above the socio-economic status of each family (Alton-Lee, 2016).

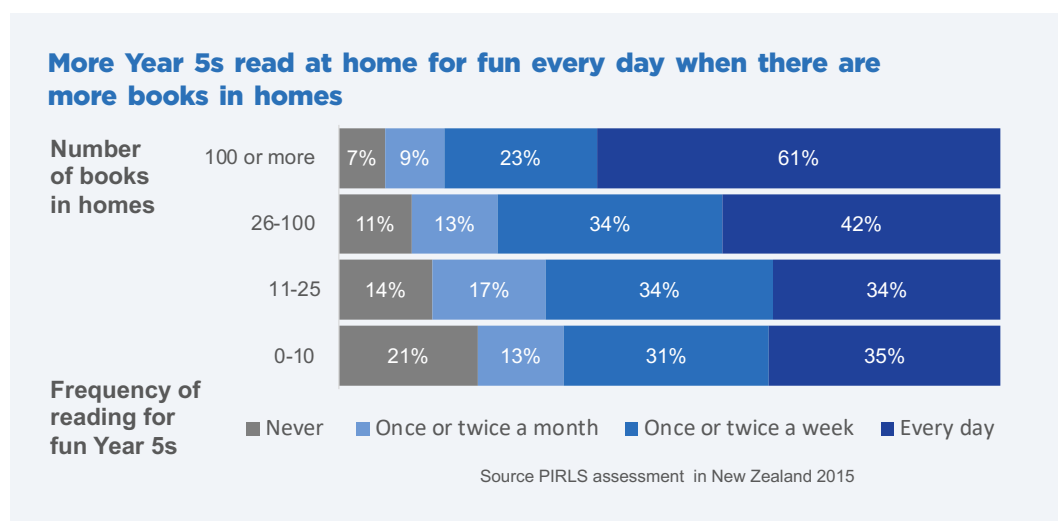
Access to books: Across Aotearoa New Zealand, there are inequities in access to books and texts, including access to technology and digital platforms for learning. Research shows the number of books in the home is one of the strongest predictors of reading achievement (Ministry of Education, 2017a).



However, PIRLS data shows a steady decline in the number of books in homes in Aotearoa New Zealand, over the past 15 years (Ministry of Education, 2017a).



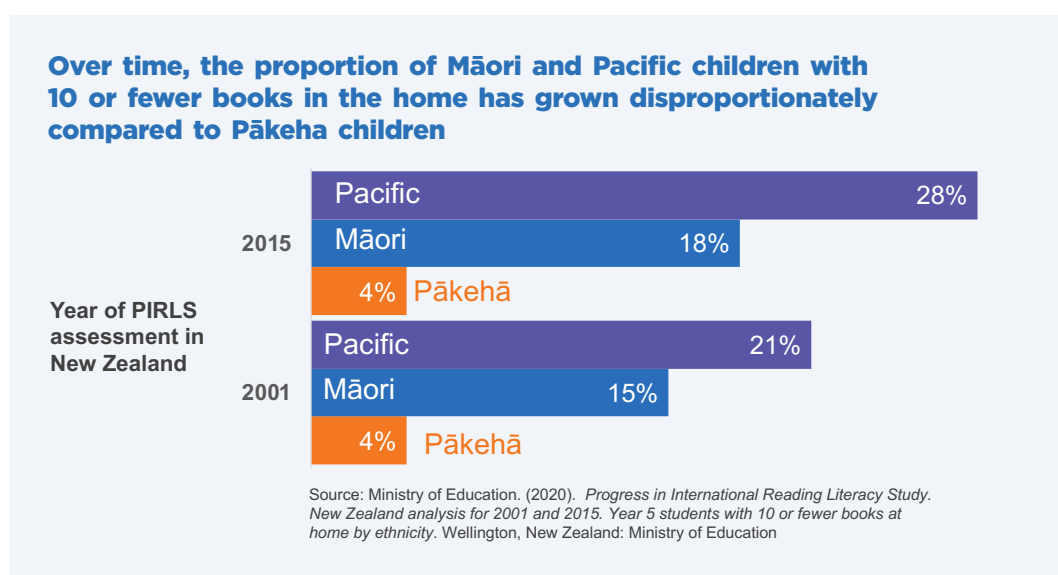
Students are less likely to read every day without equitable ease of access to books, resulting in negative reading outcomes for learners (Ministry of Education, 2017a).



Poverty matters: In an OECD assessment of the 2018 PISA results, socio-economically advantaged students in Aotearoa New Zealand outperformed disadvantaged students in reading by 96 score points. This disparity was like that found across OECD countries (with an average of 89 score points disparity).

Within Aotearoa New Zealand many children continue to live in poverty and do not have access to essential living needs. According to Stats NZ (2021), many Aotearoa New Zealand children (11.3%) go without more than six of the 17 basic items most people regard as essentials. In addition, more Māori children (19.5 %) and Pacific children (26.1%) live in households where they go without more than six of these 17 basic items (Stats NZ, 2021).

PIRLS data showed increasing disparity for Māori and Pacific children compared with Pākehā children between 2001 and 2015. For example, at Year 5 in 2015, almost a fifth of Māori learners and over a quarter of Pacific children had 10 or fewer books in their homes (Ministry of Education, 2020).



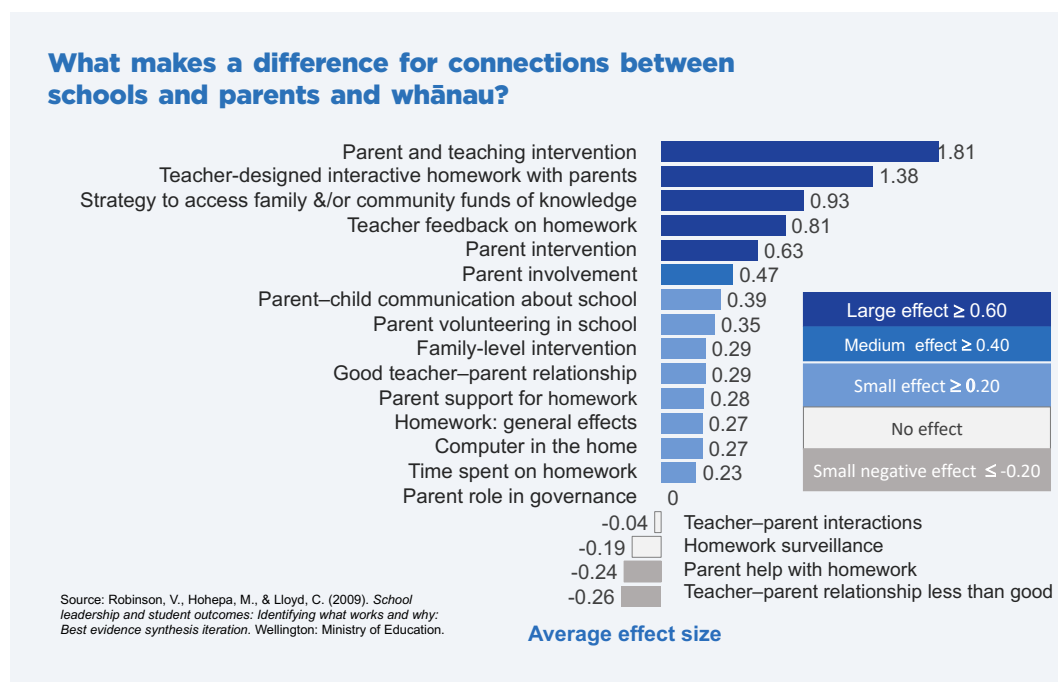
What is the size of the problem? Stats NZ (2021) reported that 18.4% of Aotearoa New Zealand children (210,500, or about 1 in 5) lived in households with less than 50% of the median equivalised disposable household income in the year ended June 2020. This is a decrease (and therefore an improvement) from 22.8 % of children in the year ended June 2018. However, around 49,000 Māori children (17.1%) and 28,000 Pacific children (19.1%) still live in households with less than 50% of the median equivalised disposable household income (before deducting housing costs). These rates compare with 13.8% of Aotearoa New Zealand children overall.

Need to build strong connections with family, whānau and communities to support positive learner outcomes

Robinson et al. (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of research, *School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why: Best evidence synthesis iteration [BES]* drawing both on New Zealand and international studies, to assess the educational impact of connections between schools, families, whānau and communities. They found that building a sense of community among parents, whānau, children, and teachers helped break down barriers to children engaging in learning.

As part of this, it was critical that principals were the pedagogical leaders of learning. The researchers also found it vital that teachers make strong connections with families to better reflect the needs and aspirations of family and whānau. Researchers found that the largest overall effect size was for interventions designed to help parents and whānau support children's learning at home and school.

At a meta-analysis level, the following diagram shows the various aspects that make a difference for connections between schools and parents and whānau.



Well-meant intentions and pressure from parents and whānau can harm children's reading progress

Parents and whānau don't know what they don't know, and well-intentioned pressure on children to read can do harm.

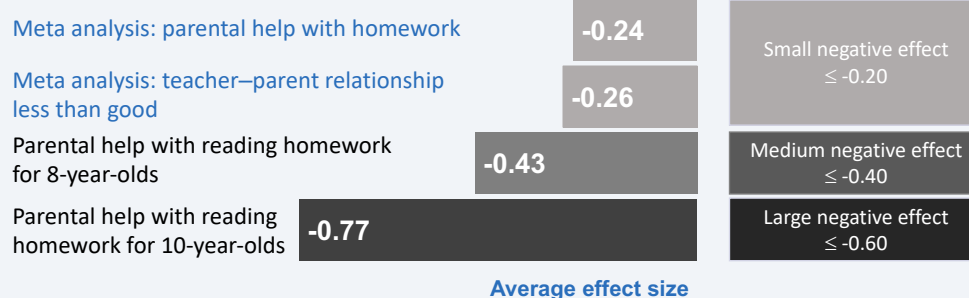
In 1983, Jeanne Biddulph noticed that some parents and whānau saw they could not support their children effectively without receiving the right kind of encouragement and support themselves. Despite good intentions, some parents and whānau recognised they were punitive and disciplinary in their approach to homework. Homework time was associated with growling, anger, shouting, name-calling, mocking, punishing, and hitting their children (Alton-Lee, 2016; Biddulph, 1983). These harmful practices continue to this day (Oakden, 2021).

The report *School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why: BES* (Robinson et al., 2009) confirmed that parents and whānau could cause educational harm. The researchers found that ineffective parent help with homework could lead to a negative effect – and they assessed the effect size at -0.24.

Three reports by Madden and Madden (2013, 2014b, 2015b), further support this assessment that without the correct practices, parents and whānau unintentionally made the child's learning to read more difficult before attending Reading Together®. Examples included asking their children to read texts that were beyond the child's reading level, covering up picture clues, and giving answers rather than using prompts. Parents and whānau also focussed on word accuracy without attending to the meaning of the text.

Research from the New Zealand Competent Children longitudinal study (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 2) assessed the negative effect for parent help with reading homework was between -0.26 and -0.43 for children aged 8 and between -0.48 and -0.77 for children aged 10. These data revealed that, while there were many international studies indicating a pattern of negative effects of parental 'help' with reading homework, such well-intended 'help' in Aotearoa has been particularly damaging. Therefore, more effective, systemic support for parents is critical.

In New Zealand there is a strong negative association with parents helping with reading homework



Source 1: Robinson, V., Hohepa, M., & Lloyd, C. (2009). *School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why: Best evidence synthesis iteration*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
Source 2: Ministry of Education. (2013). *Memo: Reading Together - Follow-up Actions IM8518005*. Internal document: Wellington: Ministry of Education.

This quote from a parent describes how they used the same detrimental practice with their children that their own parents had used – and were unable to break the cycle.

That's something I really remember was being excited to go home with a book and read to my Mum and Dad and just the way they would like help me, it really struck fear into me after that. And then next minute I don't want to take any books home, I don't even want to learn how to read you know, all of those sorts of things so...

And then my Mum found out I was hiding books away and she'd make me read and then I'd get one word wrong in the sentence and I would have to read that sentence over and over and over again till I got it right.

I wasn't even learning after that. I was shut down and was just going through the motions. I didn't even know what I was reading about, didn't even know what the story was about.

And that's something I could see I was doing with my own son that he was a bit scared, he was bumming out, he was over it and all that.

— Parent. (Ministry of Education, 2019).

"And then next minute I don't want to take any books home, I don't even want to learn how to read you know, all of those sorts of things so..."

"...he was a bit scared, he was bumming out, he was over it and all that."

Here is another parent comment after attending the Reading Together® workshops which captures the shift in approach to supporting their child's reading.

They taught us the way we approach them, the voice, the tone of our voice and to be more patient with them. And more time if they don't know the word. I took it home with me and I put in to practice with my young ones which has really helped, not only with their reading, it does help with the relationships between me and my children.

— Parent. (Ministry of Education, 2018b).

"I took it home with me and I put in to practice with my young ones which has really helped."

Need to build stronger teacher practice in reading

To reduce disparities for all students, including Māori and Pacific students, teachers need further professional development in reading (Alton-Lee, 2016). The *Teacher professional learning and development: Best evidence synthesis iteration* (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007) is a synthesis of research, drawing both on New Zealand and international studies, to assess the educational impact of teachers' professional learning and development. Timperley et al. (2007) suggest the activities that promote professional learning in literacy include:

- professional instruction
- activities that link key ideas to teaching practice
- activities that help teachers enact key ideas in their own classroom
- taking part in professional learning communities (p. 148).

The summary for this BES was sought by the International Academy of Education, *Teacher professional learning and development* (Timperley, 2008). Timperley provides 10 more helpful findings on how to promote professional learning, including:

- focus on valued student outcomes
- draw on worthwhile content
- integrate teacher knowledge and skills
- use student assessment for teacher professional inquiry
- take multiple opportunities to learn and apply information
- use approaches that are responsive to the context of learning processes
- take opportunities to process new learning with others through collegial interaction
- draw on knowledgeable expertise from outside the group
- active leadership from designated leaders promotes professional learning
- maintain momentum to sustain improvement (Timperley, 2008)
- make sure teachers activate educationally powerful connections (Robinson, et al. 2009).

For more detail on the key principles of teacher professional learning please see a summary in Appendix B, on [page 88](#).

Need to build stronger leadership practice in reading

The quantitative findings of *School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why: BES* (Robinson et al., 2009) link through from leadership practices to student outcomes. An important finding was that a school leader promoting and taking part in teacher learning had by far the highest impact on student outcomes.

The qualitative findings also highlighted the importance of creating educationally powerful connections. But the research showed considerable variability in results. Sometimes the work principals did with parents had a positive effect, but it could also have a small negative effect. Therefore, creating educationally powerful connections is one area with the most opportunity to strengthen leadership in Aotearoa New Zealand schools (Alton-Lee, 2016; Robinson et al., 2009).



*Creating
**educationally
powerful
connections** is
one area with the
most opportunity
to strengthen
leadership*

Key aspects of leadership that make a difference for teacher professional learning and development and students' outcomes



Source: Robinson, V., Hohepa, M., & Lloyd, C. (2009). *School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why: Best evidence synthesis iteration*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Ministry needs to select and support high impact programmes

The Ministry needs to select and support high-impact programmes and policies to bring about change and spend taxpayer money wisely. The *Teacher professional learning and development: Best evidence synthesis iteration* (Timperley et al., 2007) drew from the groundbreaking work of US academic Cynthia Coburn. Her work, *Rethinking scale: Moving beyond numbers to deep and lasting change* (2003), is still relevant today (Hubers, 2020). She suggested that scaling up includes “four interrelated dimensions: depth, sustainability, spread, and shift in reform ownership” (p. 4).

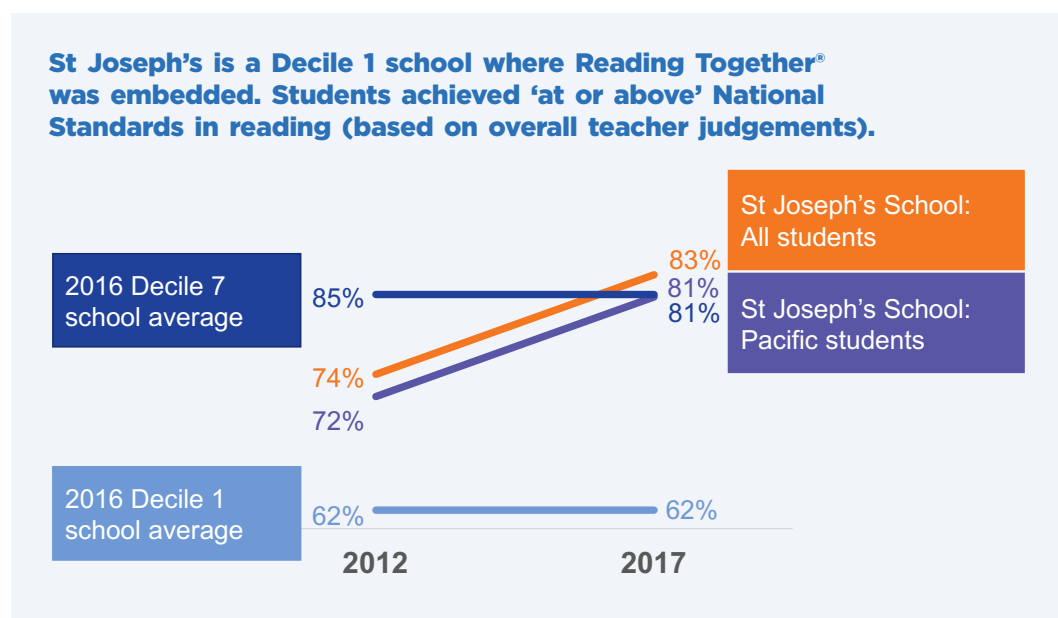
- **Depth:** includes changes in teachers’ beliefs, changes in the way teachers and students interact with one another and changes in the ways teachers think about their approach to their teaching (pedagogy).
- **Sustainability:** is the notion that changes last over time, and programmes do not fall into disuse.
- **Spread:** includes the spread of ideas broadening to more schools and classes, as well as deepening the changes in norms within schools and across regions.
- **Shifts in reform ownership:** “to be considered “at scale,” ownership over the reform must shift so that it is no longer an “external” reform, controlled by a reformer, but rather becomes an “internal” reform with authority for the reform held by districts, schools, and teachers who have the capacity to sustain, spread, and deepen reform principles themselves” (Coburn, 2003, p. 7).

Scaling up includes “four interrelated dimensions: **depth, sustainability, spread, and shift in reform ownership**”

Reading Together® is a high-performing programme that can address many of these challenges

Research shows that well-designed interventions can be powerful. For example, from just five hours of contact with parents and whānau, Reading Together® achieves an effect size of 0.44 (Rowe, 2007), which is equivalent to the effect of more than a year's teaching.

The original study (Biddulph & Tuck, 1983) and later studies (Tuck et al., 2007; Madden & Madden, 2015a) consistently found that children made significant gains in reading achievement when supported by parents and whānau who had taken part in the workshops designed to teach them how to effectively support their children's reading. Importantly, data collected up to 12 months later showed continued gains over time (Tuck et al., 2007). This has been confirmed in subsequent research, for example at St Joseph's School, Otahuhu.



Biddulph (1983, 1993), found that the Reading Together® programme offered positive effects: children's attitude to reading improved, and parents and whānau became more skilled in supporting their children's reading. In addition, parents and whānau used similar strategies with siblings, thus spreading the programme's benefits within the family and resulting in more positive family relationships. As well, parents and whānau built high-trust school-parent relationships.

The *Reading Together® Workshop Leader's Handbook* (Biddulph, 2019) provides in-depth pedagogical information about how children learn to read. When a school follows a whole-school approach in adopting the programme, all teachers can improve their reading teaching practice and enhance their engagement with students (Ministry of Education, 2018b; Tuck et al., 2007). Several studies (Ministry of Education, 2018a, 2018b, 2019) have shown the benefits of taking a whole-school approach to implementing Reading Together®. Therefore Reading Together® is one approach schools can take to lift reading achievement and strengthen teacher practice.

Reading Together® has clear principles of practice

Reading Together® has clearly expressed principles of practice that have the potential to enhance wellbeing by:

- raising children's reading levels and seeking continued reading improvement for readers who need support, Māori and Pacific children, and children with learning support needs
- improving children's reading levels throughout Aotearoa New Zealand
- helping parents and whānau quickly learn to support their children's reading in ways that create positive family-child relations
- building or strengthening high trust and lasting relationships between school staff, parents, whānau, iwi, librarians, and communities
- creating educationally powerful connections that recognise and respect the parent, whānau and child's culture, language and identity
- ensuring all children have access to books and text to build a habit of reading at home (adapted from Alton-Lee, 2016, p. 7-8).

The following chapter provides more detail on the benefits of Reading Together® for parents, whānau and children. It also describes the benefits for schools in running this programme.

Evidence of outcomes for those engaged in Reading Together®

*Māori, Pacific and non-Māori children experience **continued and long-term gains***



Participants from Reading Together® Te Pānui Ngātahi at Ngāti Moko Marae: A School-Iwi Partnership implementation exemplar: Fairhaven School-Iwi Partnership.

Strong evidence of positive outcomes from participation in Reading Together®

How Reading Together® helps children, parents and whānau

Since it started, Reading Together® has helped parents and whānau to support their children's learning (Biddulph, 1983). Across 38 years of research and evaluation studies, there is strong evidence of multiple valued outcomes. There are important changes in parents, whānau and children from taking part in the Reading Together® programme. There are also changes for principals, teachers and schools from their involvement with the programme.

Reading Together® is found to be “a high impact school-parent and whānau literacy intervention in three best-evidence syntheses and a prototype implementation study focused on effective leadership of the intervention.” (Alton-Lee, 2016, p. 2).

The positive impact from Reading Together® occurs in the following areas:

- many children's reading improves, including under-achievers, when their parents attend four one-and-a-quarter-hour workshops – just five hours in total
- Māori, Pacific and non-Māori children experience continued and long-term gains in reading when compared with non-Reading Together® children
- there is a fall in the unintended negative effects from parents and whānau helping with reading
- family and homework stress are reduced, and instead, parents and whānau foster whānau wellbeing
- children, parents and whānau get greater access to books and information in both text and digital formats, that is, Reading Together® students, family and whānau experience improved equity of access
- increased parent and whānau engagement with their children's school improves and relationships between schools and their communities
- the changed relationships forged between parents, whānau and their children's teachers have wider implications for culturally responsive schooling.

Because reading is built on relationships, it promotes social wellness. The relationships that develop over a book are positive feelings, provided we can take the stress out of the situation and Reading Together® does that.

— Deputy Principal. (Biddulph J. , 2019, p. 5).

Reading Together® shows consistent results over time when implemented well

Research and evaluation studies find that children, parents, whānau, teachers, and school leaders experience consistent and multiple valued outcomes from taking part in Reading Together® (Biddulph, 1983, 1993; McNaughton et al., 2012; Madden & Madden, 2013, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b; Oakden, 2021; Oakden & Wehipeihana 2010; Tuck et al., 2007; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009).

Relationships are at the heart of Reading Together® and parents and whānau reported positively connecting and engaging, more often with their children after attending the programme (Madden & Madden, 2013, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b; Oakden, 2021; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009). Also, stronger, lasting, learning partnerships developed between parents and whānau, children and schools.

Parents', whānau and children's comments were nearly always positive. Many studies showed how Reading Together® supported the transformative change for parents and whānau with reports of increased confidence and a shift from stress to harmony and patience in the home (Biddulph, 1983, 1993; McNaughton et al., 2012; Madden & Madden, 2013, 2014b, 2015b; Oakden, 2021; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009; Tuck et al., 2007). The wellbeing of children and their families and whānau were improved through participating in Reading Together®.

Educationally powerful relationships also developed between teachers and senior leaders within schools (Alton-Lee, 2016; Ministry of Education, 2018a, 2018b, 2019). The rest of this chapter summarises changes for each stakeholder group at a high level, with parents, whānau and children (including siblings) explored first. Then we explore the changes for school leaders, teachers, and librarians.

Positive changes in parents' and whānau behaviour and attitudes (including changes for siblings)

Consistent changes occurred for parents and whānau from attending the Reading Together® sessions, including:

- increased knowledge and understanding of how children learn to read
- new strategies and tools to support their children
- more confidence supporting their children to learn to read
- reprioritised learning at home, including creating a safe and settled space for reading
- improved social wellbeing and connection with their children
- access to new reading material that is of interest to the children
- improved parent-teacher and school relationships
- engaging in the learning agenda of the school.

Parents and whānau become more knowledgeable and understand how children learn to read

Through attending the Reading Together® workshops, parents and whānau said they picked up new knowledge and an increased understanding of how to support their children to learn to read. For example, many parents and whānau had forgotten how difficult learning to read was. After the workshops, they realised how stressful reading can be from their child's point of view (McNaughton, Jeurissen, Trinick, & Allpress, 2012; Madden & Madden, 2013, 2014b, 2015b; Oakden, 2021; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009; Tuck et al., 2007).

With this new knowledge and improved understanding, parents and whānau said they better led and supported the reading process. They found reading with their children more enjoyable and less frustrating – and as a result saw a difference occur in their children's achievement and engagement (McNaughton et al., 2012; Madden & Madden, 2013, 2014b, 2015b; Oakden, 2021; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009; Tuck et al., 2007).

With improved understanding, parents and whānau found their empathy and patience increased (Ministry of Education, 2018a; Oakden, 2021). Parents' expectations became more realistic, and they could better support their child's learning (Madden & Madden, 2014b; Oakden, 2021; Oakden & Wehipeihana, 2010). Parents and whānau felt happy about the positive part they played in the transformation (Madden & Madden, 2013).

There is a whole new game-plan in our house now. No more put-downs, no more 'How come you don't know that word you just had it over here and over there?' I trust in the thinking that if you build the love of and for reading that means me being in that moment to help reveal the messages, build the pictures, construct the understanding; helping to break and expose the secret code. Watch this space.

— Parent. (School Milestone Report, 2012).

"No more put-downs, no more 'How come you don't know that word?'"

Parents and whānau learn new strategies and tools to help their children to learn to read

Since the start of Reading Together®, parents and whānau have learnt new strategies to support their children's reading. In one of Jeanne Biddulph's early papers: *Teacher-parent partnership to support children's reading development* (1993), she noted that over four workshops' parents and whānau can build a repertoire of tools to support their child's reading. They can learn how to: access new reading material, become positive models of reading with children, find suitable texts and develop strategies for assessing when reading material is too difficult for children to read.

In more recent examples, parents and whānau spoke about learning new knowledge and understanding words and new concepts that they had not experienced before (Ministry of Education, 2018a, 2018b, 2019). In numerous Reading Together® research and evaluation reports, parents and whānau have described the specific tips and strategies they have used to support their children learning to read, including:

- choosing suitable books at the right level of difficulty
- talking about pictures in books
- allowing 'wait time' (so the child has time to figure it out)
- choosing a good time to read
- when to correct their children's reading
- how to praise and give encouragement to their children
- where to get books to read (McNaughton et al., 2012; Madden & Madden, 2013, 2014b, 2015b; Oakden, 2021; Oakden & Wehipeihana 2010; Tuck et al. 2007; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009).

[Reading Together®] changed the way I deal with homework. More time is taken to look through the books and at pictures. Asking questions about the book is really good.

— Parent. (McNaughton et al., 2012, p. 40).

Parents and whānau become more confident helping their children to learn to read

As parents' knowledge grew and they applied what they learned in the workshops, they became more confident and comfortable in their ability to support their children (Alton-Lee, 2016; Ministry of Education, 2018a). Confident and patient parents and whānau created a relaxing atmosphere with less pressure for their children. They noticed how their stress levels and anxiety decreased significantly – as did their children's (Ministry of Education, 2018a).

Parents and whānau chose times for reading when they were calm to give their child time and use praise consistently (Madden & Madden, 2013). Conversely, parents and whānau started to avoid reading when they or their child were in a bad mood, tired or hungry.

In a Rotorua trial (Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009), after attending Reading Together®, almost all whānau (95%) said they were more confident to support their children's reading. They also had the confidence to provide support to others – with just over half (56%) of whānau talking to others about Reading Together® and sharing how to help their children learn to read.

Parents and whānau reprioritise learning at home and create a safe and settled space for reading

With a repertoire of new strategies and tools, whānau made changes in their home, to support their children's learning-to-read journey (McNaughton et al., 2012; Madden & Madden 2014b; Ministry of Education 2018a, 2018b, 2019; Oakden, 2021; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009).

Whānau were almost always able to apply what they learnt on the programme. There was clear evidence of changes in family routines and whānau reading behaviours. Notable changes spontaneously reported by whānau were the way they:

- altered their routines at home to make more time for reading
- set aside specific times and places for reading
- focussed on one child at a time
- turned off the television when children were reading
- visited the library.

Parents and whānau described strategies that were simple to do and proved to be revelatory for many participants (Madden & Madden 2014b). These included:

- talking about a story together
- allowing wait time for the learner to have a go at deciphering a word.

Reading Together® also provided an alternative positive experience for parents and whānau who had struggled with reading and school when they were younger (Madden & Madden, 2013; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009).

The lasting impression that stayed with me was a Mum who was really, really honest in our group, and she said that when she was a child learning to read that if she got it wrong, she'd be smacked, and if she got it wrong a second time she'd be smacked again. And that she was doing the same to her children. She was using the strategies that she had learnt because of what she went through, but she was there in that workshop to learn something different, to try something different, and I really admired her for being so brave.

— School parent. (Ministry of Education, 2019).

Homelives improve through parents and whānau connecting and engaging more with their children

Following the workshops, parents and whānau said they now enjoyed reading with their children and for themselves. Parents and whānau said reading was now fun; they enjoyed being humorous together and reading for sheer joy. Parents and whānau also reported they spent more time communicating with their children (Madden & Madden, 2013, 2014b, 2015b; McNaughton et al., 2012).

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 [has] just made life easier. Less tension at home; we're better friends.

— Parent. (Madden & Madden, 2013, p. 16).



"It's reduced a lot of stress in our home!"

Within the Manurewa Central School exemplar, school leaders explained the effects of the Reading Together® intervention as a pathway towards social wellness. Leaders noted the programme supported both health and wellbeing, allowing parents to connect with others in healthy and positive relationships (Ministry of Education, 2018a).

As parents and whānau became aware of the importance of providing emotional support for their children while helping them with their reading, relationships improved. Workshop facilitators also regularly reported seeing stronger relationships develop between parents and whānau and their children from attending Reading Together® (Madden & Madden, 2013, 2014b; McNaughton et al., 2012).

Reading shifted from a disciplinary must-do job to a shared fun family time, as expressed by one parent:

Reading is no longer a task, but something to enjoy. Kapai to mahi me haere tonu!

(Madden & Madden, 2013, p. 3).

Changes in sibling behaviour also occurred. Reflecting a tuakana-teina model, older siblings started helping and supporting their younger siblings, sitting with them to read. Sibling reading achievement also improved as an indirect benefit of the workshops. Parents often used what they learned with their other children (Madden & Madden, 2013; McNaughton et al., 2012; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009).

Many of the children commented that they read at home to older or younger siblings, and their parents spoke positively about this practice. The older children helped [them] a lot.

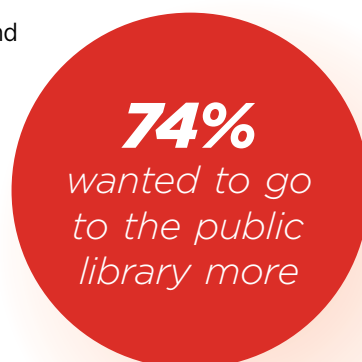
(McNaughton et al., 2012, p. 31).

Parents and whānau start accessing new reading material that is of interest to their children

As parents and whānau began to engage more positively with their children's reading, they saw value in their children having a wide range of reading material, and they sought extra resources. Parents and whānau built a positive relationship with a local librarian who in turn helped their children find suitable, interesting reading material (Madden & Madden 2013, 2014a; Oakden, 2021; Oakden & Wehipeihana, 2010).

Reading Together® parents consistently talked of increased library use and librarians engaged with children more (Good, 2014b). In an independent evaluation of Reading Together® workshops for whānau at three schools in Rotorua from 2008 to 2009, whānau reported their children had increased access to books and:

- 74% wanted to go to the public library more
- 74% brought home more books from the school library and knew where to go in the library to find the books they liked
- 58% knew they could ask the librarian for help (Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009).



Parents and whānau have improved parent-teacher-school relationships and engagement with the school system

After attending Reading Together®, parents, whānau and teachers also reported benefits for other learning areas, increased engagement of parents and whānau with schooling, and improved relationships between schools and their communities (Alton-Lee, 2016; Ministry of Education 2018b, 2019).

With increased knowledge and confidence, parents and whānau engaged and interacted with schools better. In the evaluation of the Rotorua trial of Reading Together® across three schools, around half of the participants reported that the workshops were a catalyst for better relationships with the school. Participating parents and whānau strongly agreed that they felt better visiting the school. This was because: they knew the teachers more now (53%); 89% felt they got to know the Deputy and Assistant Principal more, and 50% of whānau reported they had talked to their child's teacher since attending the Reading Together® workshops (Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009).

The quality of engagement with parents and whānau that developed through Reading Together® positively influenced the culture and practice of the school for all aspects of parent and whānau engagement (Alton-Lee, 2016; Ministry of Education, 2018a). School leaders strengthened and built relationships with parents and whānau (Ministry of Education, 2018a).

As parents and whānau experienced the benefits of Reading Together®, they also began to engage in other areas of the children's learning. Manurewa Central School parents and whānau requested similar support in other curriculum areas, particularly Mathematics. In response, Manurewa Central started work on developing a follow-up maths programme for parents and whānau who wanted to learn how to help their children (Alton-Lee, 2016).

More generally, following the workshops parents and whānau engaged more and “popped in” to school and joined in with classroom learning. Parents and whānau felt more confident to speak freely with school staff and, in many cases, started to attend school trips and special events for the first time (Alton-Lee, 2016).

..... *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.*

— Parent. (Madden & Madden, 2013, p. 5).

Some parents and whānau also took up study and became more involved in the school through the Parent Teachers' Association and Board of Trustee roles (Ministry of Education, 2018a, 2018b, 2019).

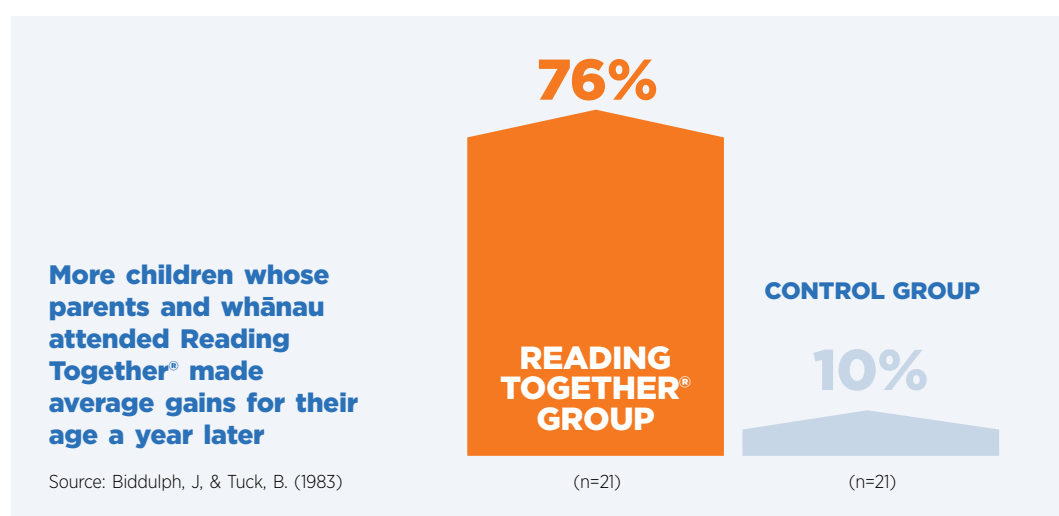
Big shifts in attitudes, behaviour and achievement amongst children

The critical outcome from Reading Together® is that changes occur for children – and their siblings – from their parents and whānau attending the programme. The significant changes were:

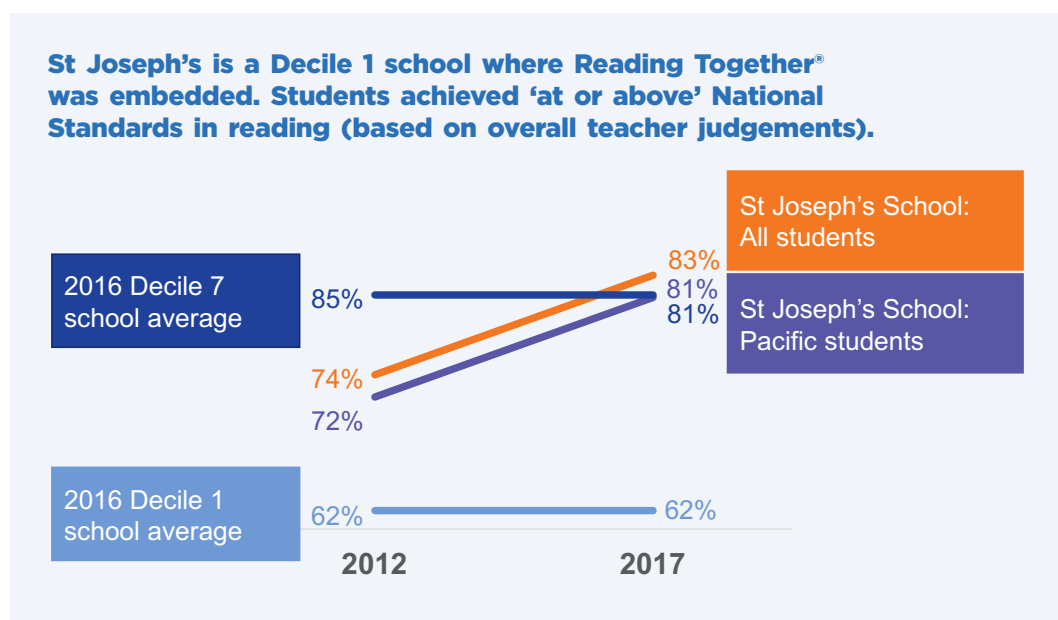
- improved reading results for children and siblings
- improved relationships with parents and whānau
- changes in children's attitudes and feelings towards reading
- increased confidence and engagement in reading
- improved confidence and engagement in school.

Improved reading results for children and for siblings

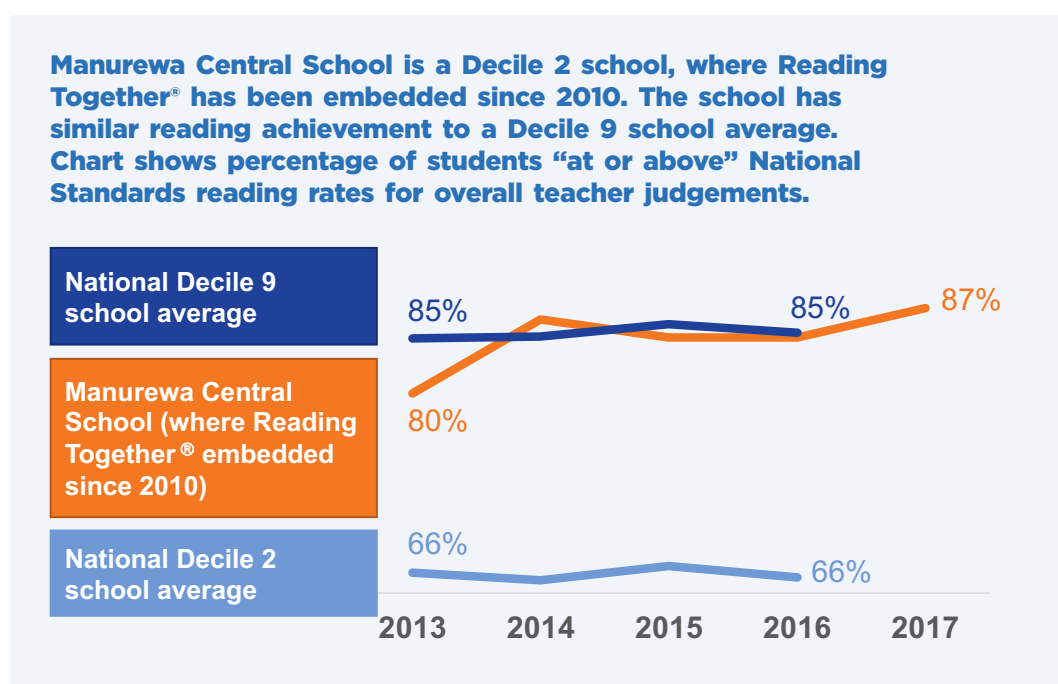
One of the critical changes from attending Reading Together® was that often children's reading improved. Schools collecting assessment data noted continued positive shifts in children's reading levels. In 1983, Biddulph and Tuck found the children whose parents and whānau attended Reading Together® made significantly greater gains on the GAP Reading Comprehension Test during the period of parent involvement than the children in the contrast group. And these gains were sustained a year later.



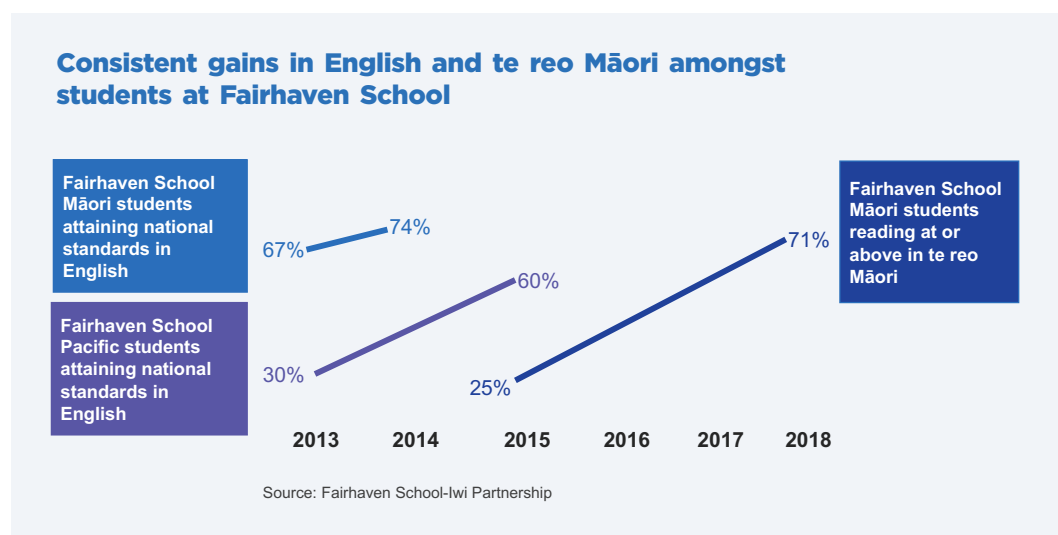
Achievement gains also occurred in more recent Reading Together® implementations. For instance, a decile 1 school, St Joseph's, showed ongoing gains for the percentage of students at or above the national standards. Indeed, their results exceeded decile 7 levels for National Standards (Good, 2017).



Likewise, Manurewa Central School (Decile 2) matched the accelerated reading achievement of Decile 9 schools for the percentage of students at or above the national standard in reading (Good, 2017).



In Fairhaven School, following Reading Together® implementation in 2014, the percentage of Māori students attaining national standards in English lifted from 67% in 2013 to 74% in 2014 (Good, 2017). The percentage of Māori students reading at or above expectation in te reo Māori nearly trebled from 25% in 2015 to 71% by 2018. Shifts for Pacific students also occurred, with 30% to 60% of Pacific students attaining national standards between 2013 and 2015 (Good, 2017).



As parents and whānau applied the learnings to all children in the whānau, there was also evidence of improved reading amongst siblings. Parents and whānau noted siblings were reading more, helping one another read and experienced improved reading levels (Good, 2014a; Madden & Madden, 2014b, 2015b).

All children from the six families showed progress over this time with 3 children moving 1 and a half years in six months (these children were also on reading recovery). Younger siblings entering the school during and after the programme showed increased levels of literacy compared to their older siblings.

— Teacher. (Good, 2014a, p. 1).

Children's relationships with parents and whānau improve their wellbeing

Children's wellbeing improved. They enjoyed the undivided attention of parents and whānau helping them to read and, in their own words, commented:

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 your Mum it is 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.

"I learn new words It is very exciting and cool."

— Quotes from children. (Madden & Madden, 2013, p. 15)

Children develop positive attitudes and feelings for reading

As children's reading ability increased, the biggest change as reported by teachers was the children's attitude towards reading. Children became enthusiastic and excited about reading and led their own learning, approaching parents and whānau to read (Madden & Madden, 2014a; 2014b, 2015a).

In Madden and Madden's (2015) analysis paper on changes in student achievement and engagement, the improved attitude was the most frequently cited benefit of the workshops. One teacher commented:

I have noticed a big change in their attitudes towards reading. It has become more fun for them, and they now burst through the class door and tell me about what they have been doing at home with their whānau. It has been awesome to see. The parents also seem a lot more confident with their children.

(Madden & Madden, 2015a, p. 5)

"I have noticed a big change in their attitudes towards reading."

As children enjoyed reading more, they became more confident to read aloud, take risks and correct themselves (Ministry of Education, 2014, Good, 2014a). An improved attitude to reading flowed on to other areas of learning, especially writing and spelling, and into home life and general wellbeing (Madden & Madden, 2014b).

With children's increased interest and eagerness to read, parents, whānau, and teachers noticed that:

- children were happier to read independently during quiet reading time
- children engaged with a broader range of reading material
- children asked more questions and became keener to learn
- children knew and liked their parents and whānau being in communication with their teachers
- children appeared happy to see their parents and whānau at school (Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009).

*Children asked more questions and became **keener to learn***

Children engage more positively and confidently at school

Generally, the Reading Together® research and literature showed children's improved engagement at school (Biddulph, 1983, 1993; Madden & Madden, 2013, 2014b, 2015b; Ministry of Education, 2018a, 2018b, 2019). Biddulph (1993), noted that relationships with teachers also improved. Children felt their teachers cared about them because they took the time to involve their parents and whānau in their learning.

... *It has made him feel important that his teachers care enough to help Mum and Dad help him.*

— Parent. (Biddulph, 1993, p. 14).

Following the Reading Together® workshops, there were also positive shifts in children's classroom engagement and an associated improvement in other curriculum areas. Children engaged more in classroom conversations and some children's attendance increased markedly. With increased confidence, children were also more willing to participate in whole-class activities. Children also visited the school library more and talked more about their books with other children (Madden & Madden 2014a, 2014b, 2015b; Good, 2014b).

Children start to challenge themselves and read for pleasure

Teachers noticed that children became more confident and relaxed in school and classroom settings, willing to engage with learning and challenge themselves to work harder (Madden & Madden, 2015b; Good, 2014a).

... *It's really noticeable, two children in particular are more relaxed in class about their reading. They are less uptight about making mistakes and 'getting it right' all the time.*

(Good, 2014a, p. 1).

Other research shows children engaged more consistently with reading, often reading just for pleasure on their own (McNaughton et al., 2012; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009). Student journals kept on reading over a school holiday period revealed children:

- read every day
- engaged with diverse reading material, including books, comics, magazines, church books, newspapers, recipes (online and children's cookbook), lyrics, magazines, poems, prayers and street signs
- read in several settings by themselves, at home, friend's houses, the marae, outside, hospital
- read with parents, aunties, cousins, friends and pets
- visited the library with whānau, borrowing fiction books (adventure, horror, historical and humour) and non-fiction books (science, how to do things or make things, famous people and sports) (McNaughton et al., 2012).

Reading in homes became a fun activity for the whānau to do together. Parents and whānau thought all their children had benefited from the workshops (Madden & Madden, 2015b).

... *It is really helping both of us at home. She now wants to show me the book and discuss it before we read. I am able to also show the kids that I am a learner by coming to this programme at school. All my children are more motivated and engaged within their reading now.*

— Mother. (Madden & Madden, 2015a, p. 14).

Transformative changes occur for Māori and Pacific

Māori and Pacific parents and whānau better understand and support their children's reading needs

For Māori and Pacific there are several significant shifts and positive changes in direct relation to Reading Together® (Alton-Lee, 2016; Good, 2014a; Ministry of Education, 2018a, 2018b, 2019; Madden & Madden, 2013, 2104b, 2015a, 2015b; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009).

Many of the earlier changes noted for parents and whānau occurred for Māori and Pacific whānau. They were able to:

- fill their kete with strategies and positive ways to support their children's reading
- see the difference in their children's reading achievement and attitude towards reading as they implemented what they learned in the workshops with their children at home
- show increased empathy and emotional support, adapting and responding to children's learning needs
- enjoy reading as an activity they do together more than they did in the past
- share information with extended family members, teaching others what they had learned
- share the responsibility of supporting their children's learning, with fathers becoming more active. This change led to less stress and more harmony in homes, around homework and reading times (Alton-Lee, 2016; Good, 2014a; Ministry of Education, 2018a, 2018b, 2019; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009).

I'm glad this workshop was just for Dads... gives me a rest from doing all the learning stuff... We share the load more... so if our boy's learning isn't happening I'm not blamed or feeling terrible... It's a shared role. Hooray I say.

— Mother. (Ministry of Education, 2019).

I was watching Koro (grandad) read with our boy and I was thinking 'You're doing it wrong! You're getting angry!' So I took Koro outside and had a coffee ... 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!

— Nana. (Madden & Madden, 2013, p. 4).

"We share the load more... It's a shared role. Hooray I say."

"I took Koro outside and had a coffee ... and a chat about how to make reading fun."

Cultural responsiveness within schools grows because of Reading Together®

Reading Together® offers a platform for school leaders, teachers, school leaders, iwi, hapū, marae and churches to support learning to read with cultural awareness and cultural responsiveness. Schools develop effective partnerships with iwi, hapū, churches, and the community. This results in shared responsibility and understanding as perceptions shift (Biddulph, 1993; Ministry of Education, 2018a, 2018b, 2019).

Following a positive experience participating in Reading Together®, whānau feel comfortable, valued, affirmed, welcomed, and respected. They begin to feel more positive towards the school and engage more frequently with teachers and support school-wide events and activities (Ministry of Education, 2018a, 2018b, 2019; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009).

The school is “riding the wave” of engaged and interested community. Very soon after the first Reading Together® programme the school had a Māori Whānau meeting, which can sometimes be very awkward and uncomfortable. This was held straight after the Reading Together® programme and a lot of the families had been to the workshops so there was a considerable difference, with Māori whānau commenting how relaxed it was - very successful.

— Principal. (Good, 2014b).

As Māori and Pacific children and whānau engage more with schools, their children's learning accelerates (Alton-Lee, 2016; Good, 2014a; Ministry of Education, 2018a, 2018b, 2019).

I actually have noticed parents who have been involved in the workshop, they are more willing now to actually come into the classroom. I notice [they will come] in the morning now most times and sit with their child in our class library and read books with them.

— Teacher. (Tuck et al., 2007, p. 23).

As discussed in Fairhaven School, following the Reading Together® partnership with Ngāti Moko marae, there were significant reading achievement gains in both te reo Māori and English ([see page 36](#)).

The school's community and culture are positively impacted

Positive changes for schools

Reading Together® can help school community cultures become more inclusive and cooperative. Collaborative working environments fostered positive change in the following areas:

- the development of supportive and collective working environments between schools, and partnerships between teachers to run the programmes within their schools
- greater job satisfaction amongst teachers as they became more sensitive to learners and feel more effective within the classroom
- schools capitalising on the enthusiasm of parents and whānau and holding events in different curriculum areas
- school leaders gained keener perceptions of the experiences for parents and whānau when supporting their children to read
- schools learn how caring parents and whānau unwittingly contribute to negative impacts of the parent-child relationship (Alton-Lee, 2016; Biddulph, 1993; Ministry of Education, 2018a, 2018b, 2019; Tuck et al., 2007).

Through Reading Together®, relationships also deepened with local public librarians and school librarians. This ensured an ongoing rich array of texts was presented to children. In addition, librarians provided practical support in accessing appropriate texts for children and, in some cases, provided books of interest to learners (Biddulph, 1993; Madden & Madden, 2014b, 2015b; Ministry of Education, 2018a).

... For lots of people, they can make a connection with their librarian once they've been in a few times and we get to know what they like, and we're able to make recommendations for people, but that relationship has to be built first, and that's why the Reading Together® programme is so good, because we get to connect with people who perhaps wouldn't have the confidence to step inside the doors to start off with.

— Community Librarian. (Ministry of Education, 2018a).

Reading Together® supports powerful change in the community

Although outside the scope of this action-oriented summary, it is worth noting that Reading Together® is a sufficiently robust programme to also be offered in community settings. In the past few years, it has been successfully implemented by the Ministry of Education in churches, marae, and community provider settings (Oakden, 2021). As well, the Department of Corrections has successfully offered an adaptive version of the programme to parents in prisons (Woodley, 2018, 2021). In all settings, parents and whānau have similar epiphanies when they attend all sessions, and the programme was also a catalyst for better relationships.

Summary

In all settings, a key issue is to win and keep the trust of parents and whānau and provide support so they can attend the four sessions. We leave the final word to whānau from a kura setting who said:

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. A whole new approach from me and yes, it is going to take time but I'm sure I can do it.

— Whānau (School X Milestone Report, 2012).

*In all settings, a key issue is to **win and keep the trust** of parents and whānau*

"If I knew it was this simple, I would have done it so different."

Effective implementation of Reading Together® in a school setting

*As well as significantly benefitting children, parents and whānau, Reading Together® also **benefits the teaching team within a school***



Participants from Reading Together® Te Pānui Ngātahi: Implementation for impact and enduring, reciprocal high trust relationships between families, whānau and schools. Manurewa Central School.

Implementing Reading Together® in a school setting

Key findings

Some educators justifiably fear that “programmes” will not bring about needed change (Tuck et al., 2007). *School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why: BES* (Robinson et al., 2009) has signalled New Zealand school leaders had more property and administration responsibilities than their overseas counterparts.

The development of Reading Together® is different in that it is informed by long-term research. As well as significantly benefitting children, parents and whānau, Reading Together® also benefits the teaching team within a school as effective professional development in reading (Alton-Lee, 2016; Robinson et al., 2009; Tuck et al., 2007). Alton-Lee (2016) remarks, “school leaders... have reported that the intervention is worth their investment of time because of impact” (p. 69).

When done well, lasting gains in reading can occur quickly within a school. Many studies show that effective implementation of Reading Together® can lead to a depth and sustainability of school change (Alton-Lee, 2016; Ministry of Education, 2018a, 2018b, 2019, Tuck et al. 2007).

For depth of implementation, principals and senior leaders:

- used a **strengths-based approach** to launch and run the programme, valuing the expertise of all school staff, and parents and whānau
- took a **whole-school approach** to introducing, planning and running Reading Together®, with clear roles and responsibilities for many on the staff
- built **strong relationships** with parents and whānau in their school community to remove any barriers to participation. For instance, a warm, culturally responsive invitation to attend Reading Together® was critical to the programme’s success. As was engaging, connecting, and running the workshops in an enjoyable and non-judgmental way for parents and whānau. Leaders made sure the programme was run well, parents and whānau enjoyed attending and did not drop out.

For sustainability of implementation, principals and senior leaders:

- **use the Reading Together® smart tools** to support delivering the core parts of the programme with fidelity while using the teaching team’s relational skills to support learning and change
- **use robust data management systems** to build Reading Together® into the business-as-usual operation of the school, rather than running it as a separate or ad hoc programme
- **resource adequately in terms of time, funding and support** to set up and run the programme well.

When implemented with fidelity and culturally responsively, Reading Together® can quickly raise children's reading achievement. But poor implementation may result in parents and whānau not engaging enough with Reading Together® to get the expected gains. For the outcome of equity, therefore, it is critical to monitor implementation and whānau participation and dropout rates so that changes can be made to ensure Māori and Pacific learners do not miss out on the benefits. Otherwise, the benefits of Reading Together® might bypass Māori, Pacific and/or the most disadvantaged. It is also vital to measure student reading achievement regularly to ensure the programme works as expected.

Use a strengths-based approach to launch and run the programme

A strengths-based approach is one that focusses on “strengths and potential rather than... failures” (Robinson et al., 2009, p. 89). In a learning setting, leaders and teachers in schools embraced a strengths-based approach to work collaboratively. This approach helped develop relationships while implementing Reading Together®. As a result, the whole school and the community became a resource the school could draw on to run Reading Together® (Ministry of Education 2018a, 2018b, 2019).

Across three schools, there are longitudinal examples of strong implementation, and principals applying strength-based principles was critical to the school's preparation and successful implementation of the programme (Alton-Lee, 2016; McNaughton et al., 2012; Ministry of Education, 2018a, 2018b, 2019; Oakden & Wehipeihana, 2010; Tuck et al., 2007).

First, principals noticed the potential of the programme. Next, they briefed the senior leadership team, staff and board on why they thought implementing Reading Together® was worth considering.

[What] got me started on Reading Together®, was Jeanne Biddulph saying that parents don't really understand how they should read with their children especially around school readers coming home; they often do more harm than good. She would say, the damage starts when the first book goes home. And I remember thinking at the time... We can't have that!

— Principal. (Ministry of Education, 2018a).

“[What] got me started on Reading Together®, was Jeanne Biddulph saying that parents don't really understand how they should read with their children.”

Often, principals and members of the Senior Leadership Team either met with the developers (Tuck et al., 2007) or attended seminars about Reading Together® (Oakden & Wehipeihana, 2010). In the early years, seminars were run by the programme developer (Oakden & Wehipeihana, 2010), and later by Ministry staff with a deep understanding of the programme (Good, 2015). These sessions were important professional development opportunities for senior leaders and allowed them to better understand what the programme involved.

It was quite clear that Jeanne Biddulph ... knew an awful lot about how children learn to read, how parents can support them; all the dynamics around reading and learning to read and enjoying reading. So I asked Jeanne to come up and meet with myself and the senior team – the AP and DP.

— Principal. (Ministry of Education, 2018b).

Sometimes, it took time to get everyone to understand why the school might adopt Reading Together® (Tuck et al., 2007) or offer it in settings such as marae (Ministry of Education, 2019). The principal or senior leaders often led outreach to key parents and whānau to learn what might work best in their community (Boyle, 2014). Where needed, the principal or senior leaders in the school led practical problem-solving.

...There was 18 months at least of communication, preparation, consultation, discussing with kaumatua, discussing with the whānau about what we were wanting to do, and we weren't going to do it if the whānau weren't going to support the kaupapa or support the idea.

— Deputy Principal. (Ministry of Education, 2019).

Principals found that it was worthwhile taking the time to ensure key people understood the expected benefits of Reading Together®, especially key Māori and Pacific whānau (Ministry of Education, 2018a, 2018b, 2019; Tuck et al., 2007). In schools with little support from principals, implementation was less effective (Oakden & Wehipeihana, 2010).



Participants from Reading Together® Te Pānui Ngātahi at Ngāti Moko Marae: A School-Iwi Partnership implementation exemplar: Fairhaven School-Iwi Partnership.

Applying kaupapa Māori values, affirms, and supports success as Māori

To support the success for Māori children as Māori, “effectiveness depends on a strength-based approach to iwi, family, whānau and community engagement in education. This requires ‘walking the talk’ in service delivery for the five principles of Ka Hikitia: (Treaty of Waitangi, Māori potential approach, ako – a reciprocal learning approach, the understanding that identity, language and culture count, and productive partnerships) and the agreements the Crown has with iwi.” (Alton-Lee, 2016, p. 6).

For implementing Reading Together® in a way that is mana enhancing and supports success as Māori, there are certain practices that have significance for Māori including:

- whanaungatanga – driving the process of getting to know one another and establishing trust
- manaakitanga –the process of caring for others and anticipating and considering the needs of others while also respecting mana
- kotahitanga – creating the bond with one another, networking and building a sense of community
- mana tangata – acknowledging, respecting, and affirming the knowledge, skills, talents, and mana of whānau (Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009).

Workshops that were culturally sensitive and made provision for whaikorero, karakia, and waiata to welcome everyone were also important (McNaughton et al., 2012).

Adaptations to the programme for Māori, also reflected what is important to whānau and tamariki. For example, the vision of Fairhaven School and Te Iwi o Tapuika was to develop reading in a bilingual environment.

Working in partnership with Jeanne Biddulph, Wiremu Anania, developed titles and headings for the workshop materials in te reo Māori for Te Pānui Ngātahi (Ministry of Education, 2019).

“These workshops have been truly fantastic... We have presented these workshops bilingually. We have given whānau mini-libraries to take home with books in English and te reo Māori. We have also modelled most parts of the workshops in te reo as well as English, including reading with a child, and reading from a dictionary. The small amount of funding that is required to make these workshops happen is minimal in comparison to the social value that they provide. The feedback that we have had from whānau has been heart warming: how, with support from these workshops, we are changing negative experiences from the past to a positive experience for the future.”

*With support from these workshops, we are changing negative experiences from the past to **a positive experience for the future.***

— Deputy Principal and Reading Together® Workshop Leader. (Ministry of Education, 2019).

Use a whole-school approach to support introducing, planning and implementing Reading Together®

Programme works best when senior leadership lead implementation

As already noted, effective implementation of Reading Together® is more likely with leadership or strong support from the senior leadership team (Robinson et al., 2009). However, it also takes a whole-school team to implement Reading Together® well. McNaughton et al. (2012) noted that schools need to:

- appoint someone to oversee the overall co-ordination of the implementation of Reading Together® – this may be the principal or one of the senior leadership team
- monitor the workload of facilitators to ensure it is feasible
- ensure the principal is visible at some or all the sessions, signalling the importance to parents and whānau of the programme
- appoint someone to collect data, to monitor the reading gains of children whose parents take part in the programme.

Thus, there are a range of roles and responsibilities to be allocated amongst staff. The next section describes how some of these roles have been distributed in various school settings.

Roles and responsibilities need to be clear

Once a school has committed to running Reading Together®, the principal or the senior leadership team assign roles to different groups within the school and community (Alton-Lee, 2016; McNaughton et al., 2012; Ministry of Education, 2017b, 2018a, 2018b, 2019; Oakden & Wehipeihana, 2010; Tuck et al., 2007). There are several key roles.

- **Programme champions:** Champions are people who can describe the benefits of Reading Together® to potential participants and have the passion and drive to implement the programme. Often the principal and the senior leadership team were the main champions, with keen support from the board of trustees.
- **Workshop facilitators:** Facilitators are the leaders, often deputy or assistant principals, or teachers who run the programme – and are key to its success as discussed further below. They are responsible for developing a deep understanding of how to engage with parents and whānau, run the workshops, and share ideas with other classroom teachers. A facilitator will study the Reading Together® Workshop Leader's Handbook (Biddulph, 2019) so they can be guided by it. They need to thoroughly understand the pedagogical intent behind the activities and the SMART tools.
- **Administrators:** The role of administering for the workshops is often shared between principals and the senior leadership team and the facilitators. Principals are mindful to ensure the workload of facilitators remains sustainable.
- **Classroom teachers:** Teachers and teacher aides in the participating school need to understand how Reading Together® works. They also need to be aware when parents of children in their class attend Reading Together® so they can support this in their own sphere. Classroom teachers support the programme delivery by providing appropriate books, using the bookmarks smart tool, collecting data on reading achievement, and engaging with parents about their child's interests and progress. Ideally, to provide consistency for the child, they use similar practices in the classroom as suggested to the parents for reading with the child.

- **Librarians:** Community librarians and the National Library can help the school access a broader range of materials, including bilingual and culturally resonant resources for children. When schools build a relationship with the library, local librarians can be better prepared for parents. Local librarians can provide a warm welcome to the library when the programme is running and afterwards. Where needed, they can waive existing fines, thereby removing a barrier to library access (Oakden & Wehipeihana, 2010).
- **Workshop participants:** Reading Together® parents and whānau are active participants interested in helping their children learn to read (Alton-Lee, 2016). They are encouraged to share information and experiences from helping their children to read. Regardless of their own reading and writing ability, when Reading Together® is run well, parents and whānau feel enabled and supported and know they play an important role in helping run the programme.

Facilitators are critical to running the programme well

Reading Together® is designed to be run by two workshop facilitators but can also be run by a teacher on their own (Biddulph, 2019). The best facilitators have strong interpersonal skills and are known and respected in the community (McNaughton et al., 2012). Principals either shoulder-tap teachers or senior leadership team staff who they recognise as being highly skilled, respected, engaging, and non-judgemental; or let teachers volunteer to run the Reading Together® workshops (Tuck et al., 2007; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009).

*The best facilitators have strong interpersonal skills and are **known and respected in the community***

The people that you choose from your staff to be the deliverers of the programme, that's incredibly important. If the parents felt that there was any judgement from the facilitator it would impede success of the programme.

(Ministry of Education, 2018b)

Facilitators planned the very first workshop carefully. Previous research shows four-to-five days of facilitator time is needed to read the *Reading Together® Workshop Leader's Handbook* (Biddulph, 2019) and prepare the resources (Oakden & Wehipeihana, 2010). Less time is required for subsequent sessions.

Newly appointed facilitators found it worthwhile to spend quality time reading the handbook closely because the core elements of the programme need to be implemented as designed. Some seasoned facilitators still refer to the handbook before running each session (Ministry of Education, 2018a).

Facilitators and principals also recognised the importance of facilitators and classroom teachers talking to one another about children whose parents and whānau took part in Reading Together® (Ministry of Education, 2018a). This ensured information about the child's progress was shared between them. Principals allowed budget and time for this to occur.

Classroom teachers are allies who support the programme implementation

Reading Together® complements good classroom teaching. In schools implementing Reading Together® well, classroom teachers were considered allies and great supporters of the child's reading (Ministry of Education, 2017b). Many schools provided opportunities for classroom teachers to learn about the programme in more detail, either in school meetings or through attending the programme (Alton-Lee, 2016; McNaughton et al., 2012; Ministry of Education, 2017b, 2018a, 2018b, 2019; Oakden & Wehipeihana, 2010; Tuck et al., 2007).

Where schools took a whole-school approach to implementing Reading Together® there were benefits for the wider teaching community (Ministry of Education, 2018a, 2018b, 2019). When schools supported broader engagement with the programme, more teachers learned about literacy and engaged more deeply with parents, whānau and children. In addition, they were encouraged to discuss changes they saw in children in their classes.

The principal's efforts to develop staff understanding created opportunities for informal, unplanned conversations between the team leaders and teachers. She recalled "lots of conversations on the run or on the hop... and not just [with the senior management team]... there are always key people on your staff who are really interested in such initiatives."

(Ministry of Education, 2018b)

Other school staff such as teacher aides also support the programme

Schools recognised that other school staff, such as teacher aides, who are active in the classroom, can also be important in supporting the programme where they had a relationship with the parents and whānau. At times they could help broker relationships (McNaughton et al., 2012). For example, teacher aides sometimes attended the Reading Together® sessions as a parent of children at the school, which also encouraged other parents to attend.

Principals and senior leaders need to build strong relational trust

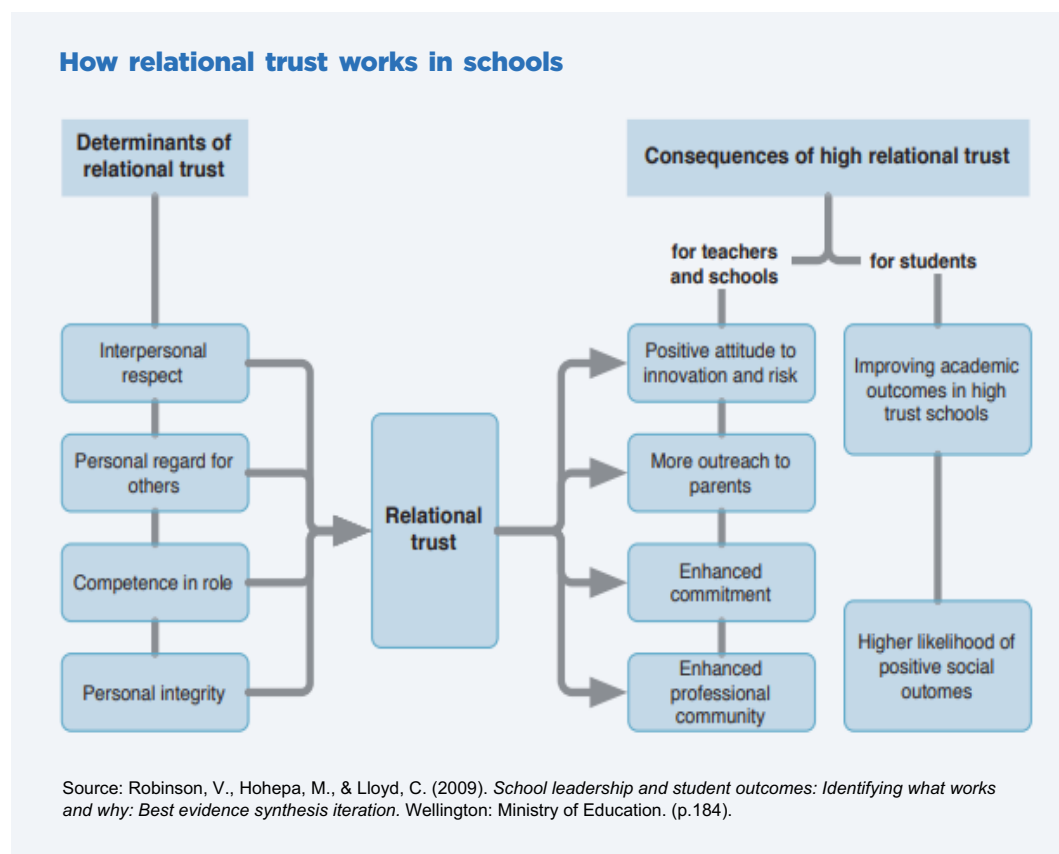
When school leaders use a strengths-based approach and involve the whole school, one of the outcomes is that relational trust builds. The process of developing relational trust takes time, a commitment to shared leadership and a willingness to embrace ways of being and doing with which partners are comfortable. For instance:

In developing and delivering the [Reading Together®] programme, particular emphasis was placed on the creation of educational partnerships that utilised the strengths of both family and school. Strategies included: (a) fostering genuine, collaborative, and non-threatening relationships between parents, children, and the workshop leader; (b) building a sense of community among parents, children, teachers, and local librarians involved in the workshops; (c) seeking parents' views, by using humour, reassurance, and personal contact, and (d) addressing barriers to involvement by addressing parental transport and childcare needs

(Robinson et al., 2009 p 162–163).

"Emphasis was placed on the creation of educational partnerships that utilised the strengths of both family and school."

The tone of the principals' communication was crucial. Principals who show respect for the views of others, are competent to make critical decisions, and operate with personal integrity are likely to build relational trust (Robinson et al., 2009).



The presence of relational trust meant the school staff developed a shared commitment to the programme. They also won the confidence and the engagement of the participating parents (Tuck et al., 2007). The following example shows what relational trust looked like for Māori whānau.

*The presence of relational trust meant the school staff developed a **shared commitment to the programme***

What relational trust looks like for Māori?

As early as 1990, teachers leading the workshops encouraged parents and whānau to talk about school systems and the impacts for their children and themselves. Parents and whānau shared that they felt “ill at ease” due to the formal school systems and it was difficult to mobilise parent support. They felt that Reading Together® workshops were a positive step to shift perceptions of school whānau relationships (Biddulph, 1993).

Since then, some schools have built partnerships based on high mutual trust with whānau Māori, iwi, hapū and marae while implementing Reading Together®. In developing strong positive partnerships, schools hold Te Tiriti o Waitangi at the forefront of communications and developments. They celebrate Māori as tāngata whenua, support Māori student learning, build relationships with whānau and consult with the Māori community.

Better engagement of whānau in Reading Together® is linked with accelerated reading achievement for their children in some schools. Whānau gave consistent feedback that they valued the Reading Together® intervention (Alton-Lee, 2016).

Fairhaven School exemplified a way of working together that respected local tikanga and mātauranga Māori. In Fairhaven’s Reading Together® programme, marae tikanga came first, as opposed to school processes. A combination of once-weekly out-of-class lessons in English and support for whānau through Reading Together® was associated with 80% of immersion students reading at an age-appropriate level in English. Reading Together® assisted with the transfer of reading strategies for Māori immersion students (Ministry of Education, 2019).

These initiatives meant whānau came to view the Fairhaven School more positively (Ministry of Education, 2019) and reduced barriers of engagement for whānau and learners. There was reciprocal respect and sharing of power (Ministry of Education, 2019). The school developed trusting relationships in a marae setting (Ministry of Education, 2019). At a practical level, the school ensured that whānau and tamariki had books in English and te reo Māori to take home after each workshop session at the marae. This celebrated literacy and supported the learners and their whānau to enjoy reading by increasing the number of books in homes (Ministry of Education, 2019).

*In developing strong positive partnerships, schools hold **Te Tiriti o Waitangi at the forefront of communications and developments**. They celebrate Māori as tāngata whenua, support Māori student learning, build relationships with whānau and consult with the Māori community.*

Ways schools offer warm, culturally responsive invitations

A common theme coming through the Reading Together® research was the need to invite parents and whānau in an affirming and appealing way. Many Māori parents and whānau lack trust in schools – they have their own negative history of schooling and expect school communication to be discouraging (Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009). Some Māori parents and whānau expect communication from schools will be about their child's poor behaviour or lack of attendance (Boyle, 2014). Therefore, Māori parents and whānau can be reluctant or hesitant to engage with schools – and may not perceive an invitation to attend Reading Together® as welcoming. Where the invitation was not sufficiently affirming, it may be misinterpreted and put parents and whānau off attending.

However, there was no one best way to extend invitations to parents and whānau (McNaughton et al., 2012; Ministry of Education, 2017b; Oakden & Wehipeihana, 2010; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009). As a result, schools have used many different approaches depending on the needs of their communities. Some examples of successful strategies are described below.

- Personal approaches are best if they are from someone parents or whānau trust. A letter from the principal may not convey the warm approach desired.
- Often the best approach from a principal is an in-person conversation. Invitations are successful when principals emphasise that they can see parents and whānau want their children to succeed: “I know you are interested in your child” (Robinson et al., 2009, p. 188).
- Teachers, teacher aides and other staff whānau who have regular contact with parents and whānau can be highly effective in recruiting parents.
- Consider “employing members of the school community... [who] provide a valuable link between whānau and school” (McNaughton et al., 2012, p. 9).
- For some of the first workshops, identify and invite well-known parents, parents who are teachers' aides, and outgoing parents who will encourage others. For subsequent sessions, offer the programme to new entrant parents or parents new to the school.
- Do not use a deficit approach and invite parents and whānau of “children who are behind in their reading”. This kind of labelling has a negative effect on children.
- Be willing to try new approaches. Don't repeat practices that haven't worked in the past.
- Be careful to emphasise partnership, be inclusive and do not stigmatise children, or parents and whānau.

We discussed the importance of reassuring parents and whānau that they will not have to read or write anything by themselves, that it doesn't matter if they can't read and write very well, etc. The emphasis was on partnership. There was also a discussion about the ways in which 'stigmatising' of children is avoided throughout the whole process. For example, when contacting parents and whānau there is no mention of 'reading difficulties', etc.

Principal. (Robinson et al., 2009, p. 188)

“Reassuring parents and whānau that ... it doesn't matter if they can't read and write very well.”

Invitations that work for Māori

Supporting whānau attendance at Reading Together® is crucial to optimise Māori children's reading outcomes. The educational and personal experiences of whānau influence their perception of the Reading Together® offering. Therefore, the school needs to take their fears and concerns into account when inviting whānau to the programme (Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009).

There may be unstated concerns such as:

- is the programme free?
- why have we been selected?
- is there something wrong with us or our children?
- will my reading ability or lack of schooling be exposed?

A more culturally responsive approach will include:

- finding out about the families' backgrounds, marae and children
- learning their names and how to pronounce them correctly
- finding out what languages' parents and whānau speak
- making invitations personable and warm, either face-to-face or by phone, based on a friendly conversation
- using a whole-school approach to personal invitations so that all staff are engaged
- ensuring invitations and planning address issues of whānau confidence, child-care, transport, and running workshops at suitable times
- initially inviting whānau with strong relationships with the school - and making sure they have a positive experience so they will champion the programme to other parents and whānau
- providing food and drink in a manner that enables whānau to feel welcome and comfortable
- offering whānau the choice of bringing a support person, so those who feel whakamā (shy) or lack confidence have support.

Some schools may need guidance and support to deliver Reading Together® in a more culturally responsive way to Māori whānau (Biddulph, 1993; Boyle, 2014; McNaughton et al., 2012; Oakden & Wehipeihana, 2010; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009).



Participants from Reading Together® Te Pānui Ngātahi at Ngāti Moko Marae: A School-Iwi Partnership implementation exemplar: Fairhaven School-Iwi Partnership.

IMPLICATIONS

Some schools in the past have assumed that if whānau did not attend, they were not interested. However, research shows that when Reading Together® is offered in a culturally responsive way, whānau do attend (Ministry of Education, 2019; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009). Therefore, it is imperative that the invitation to take part in Reading Together®, and the sessions themselves, are not deficit-based or people won't come or keep coming (Wehipeihana & Oakden 2009).

Schools found ways of putting parents and whānau at ease, including offering them sessions:

- with others of the same ethnicity
- for Māori or Pacific only, that are run along Māori tikanga or Pacific protocols
- that include karakia and waiata at the start of sessions
- with kai (Ministry of Education, 2017b, 2018a, 2018b, 2019; Oakden, 2021).

At times, parents or whānau did not feel comfortable attending the programme in a school setting (Boyle, 2014). Therefore, it may be beneficial to offer Reading Together® somewhere else. In addition, more recent implementations in community settings such as churches, other social and health provider settings (Oakden, 2021) and in prisons (Woodley, 2018, 2021) show alternative settings may be better able to get parent participation in some instances.

Ways schools make sessions attractive for parents and whānau

Schools that succeeded in getting high parent and whānau attendance at all the sessions used similar strategies (Ministry of Education, 2018a, 2018b, 2019). In summary they:

- chose highly skilled, respected teachers who were highly engaging and non-judgemental to run the Reading Together® workshops
- sought support from the programme developers or the Ministry staff responsible for overseeing and supporting the implementation of Reading Together® in schools when they had questions
- followed the *Reading Together® Workshop Leader's* (Biddulph, 2019), which provided a rich resource for teachers implementing the programme (Ministry of Education, 2018a, 2018b, 2019)
- chose a safe and welcoming setting at the school (maybe in the library or the staffroom) or offered sessions at the local marae, church, or other community location
- had support from community and central libraries who found appropriate texts, including culturally responsive texts and texts that reflected each child's culture.

At a minimum, the principal's involvement was to pop into sessions and be visible to parents and whānau. In addition, some principals assisted with the childcare, others assisted with facilitation, and some led the communication with the community.

Schools recognised that parents and whānau all want to support their children (Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009). Viewing parents as wanting the best for the children meant schools did not assume the worst of parents and whānau if they could not attend a session or dropped out. In these instances, schools worked hard to reconnect with parents to see how to help them come or to make up sessions (Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009). In turn, parents thought schools who made these connections showed they cared about their children by running Reading Together® (Oakden, 2021)

... It was nice to see such a big group of parents involved. We all want to
... best for our kids. Prioritising programmes like this means you guys (the
... school) really care about our kids.

— Parent. (Oakden, 2021)



Participants from Reading Together® Te Pānui Ngātahi: St Joseph's School Otahuhu. Best evidence in action implementation exemplar.

Keeping the workshop interesting

Workshop facilitators ran the workshops in an engaging, connecting, enjoyable, and non-threatening way for parents and whānau. One principal suggested that it is critical to show parents and whānau that the sessions are worthwhile within the first half-hour.

Nobody realises how good this programme is until they've been through it, so our biggest problem is convincing them that you should come and give this a go. Once we get them there, we have to get them hooked in the first half hour.

— Principal (Ministry of Education, 2018a)

“Nobody realises how good this programme is until they’ve been through it.”

Humour is also critical to the programme delivery and common across workshop sessions (Biddulph 1983). Humour helps build a light-hearted, interesting atmosphere, reducing parents’ nervousness. When there is laughter, parents and whānau are more at ease, and more able to join discussions and share ideas. Humour also makes the programme more interesting, and therefore parents and whānau are more likely to return.

Everyone laughs and jokes, but it works and once you get them turned on, you’re away.

— Facilitator (Ministry of Education, 2018a)

This programme was a lot of fun cos initially I thought it might have been boring lol.

— Parent (School Milestone Report, 2020)

Reducing barriers

Some parents and whānau had real, practical barriers to attending. In these instances, the school, parents, and whānau worked together to reduce the obstacles. The school sometimes found extra funding to cover some costs related to implementation. Some approaches to reducing barriers (Ministry of Education, 2017b, 2018a, 2018b, 2019) included:

- principals or senior leaders liaising with whānau working in the school to get insights into the community needs
- conducting a survey or having conversations with key community leaders to learn about the needs of parents and whānau before running the sessions
- reducing the likelihood of parents and whānau feeling vulnerable by having manaaki – an ethic of care and avoiding a deficit focus
- removing barriers to parents and whānau attending by offering childcare and transport to those who need it
- responding to the diversity of parents: in Māori and Pacific settings schools offered sessions to parents and whānau in their own language; some schools offered sessions for Dads only; being willing to use trial and error to find times that suited whānau
- offering food – schools saw offering kai as a way of helping build social connections and provide a warm, inviting environment for the sessions, ranging from a cup of tea and biscuits after school to an evening meal.

Use the smart tools to support the delivery of the programme

The Reading Together® programme developer designed a series of smart tools to help support the wider scale up of the programme in 2004 (Robinson et al., 2009). Over the years, schools have been encouraged to use these smart tools to implement the programme with fidelity. These tools serve as a 'core' for the programme delivery. They contain the material the workshop facilitator needs to master to run the programme well (Alton-Lee, 2016; Oakden & Wehipeihana 2010; Oakden, 2021). A description of the smart tools that are part of Reading Together® follows.

- **The Workshop Leader's Handbook** (Biddulph, 2019) provides detailed professional development on how children learn to read. The handbook also provides a detailed description of how to run the workshops. The latest version runs to 95 pages and is substantial. School leaders and workshop facilitators used the handbook to prepare for the Reading Together® workshops.
- **The parents and whānau booklet** provides suggestions for helping children to read at home. There is an English version and a version with the main headings translated into te reo Māori. This five-page summary of course content is a valuable resource for parents. A page of messages to parents have also been translated into other Pacific languages.
- **Brock – a 'reading book for adults'** draws on an alphabet unfamiliar to parents – and shows parents and whānau how children learn to read. Parents and whānau frequently comment that this session reinforces how hard it is for children who first start to read and helps them build empathy for the learner.
- **Jokes and riddles** help parents and children see that good reading opportunities are everywhere. The jokes intend to encourage children, parents and whānau to engage in reading in other places. The big emphasis on humour supports the idea that reading can be fun.
- **Three bookmarks** are a communication system between the classroom teacher and the parent. The bookmarks introduce the idea of different kinds of reading to parents and children. There are three colours: red means the parent should read this book to their child. Orange is for books the adult and child can read together. Green bookmarks signal the child is likely to be able to read this book alone. (Biddulph, 2019).

Previous evaluations have found that the Reading Together® smart tools are mostly fit for function and continue to be so (McNaughton et al., 2012; Oakden, 2021; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009). For some time, there have been requests for materials to “address how the programme is used with Māori parents and to increase whānau engagement” (McNaughton et al., 2012, p. 61). As the programme extends into the community, there are growing calls to provide the parent handbook in more languages and for the jokes and riddles to be adapted for specific communities (Oakden, 2021). There is also evidence that schools will make their own without the programme creator making these adaptations. Tension over making adaptations has been evident for some time:

... *One teacher however, adapted her programme to be delivered in Te Reo Māori. The book she selected to model reading with a child was in Te Reo Māori. Another facilitator spoke of her reluctance to adapt the programme because of copyright issues.*

(McNaughton et al., 2012, p. 35)

Research also shows that many schools may need additional support to implement the programme even with the smart tools. For example, schools often need help to build relationships with communities, so participants feel confident to attend the sessions (Alton-Lee, 2016; McNaughton et al., 2012; Oakden, 2021; Oakden & Wehipeihana, 2010; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009). The need for support is covered more in the next chapter.

Need for robust data management systems to build Reading Together® into the BAU of the school

Previous research shows that there can be very favourable feedback about Reading Together® from parents, whānau and school staff, but this does not always translate into improved reading gains for children (Alton-Lee, 2016; McNaughton et al., 2012; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009). Therefore, schools need to collect data about reading achievement to ensure children make gains (McNaughton et al., 2010; Tuck et al., 2007). There are many ways schools can assess reading gains, and the school needs to decide on the approach it will use. The research found in some instances, the data collected was insufficient for tracking children’s reading progress, nor comparable between schools (Evaluation Associates, 2010; McNaughton et al., 2012). In the previous scale up report (Oakden and Wehipeihana, 2010), Evaluation Associates suggested that schools could conduct:

- an analysis of STAR data
- an analysis of running record data
- a matched comparison analysis.

Robust data collection requires multiple measures, which can be challenging if there is a high turnover of children at a school. Some principals encouraged teachers to record children’s reading achievement to assess whether it was accelerating (Ministry of Education, 2018a, 2018b, 2019). However, the state of a school’s data management systems can be a good indicator of whether a school will collect and store student data for monitoring progress. McNaughton et al. (2012) suggest that schools with low data management capability may require additional support to implement Reading Together® well.

Need to resource the programme adequately: time, funding and support

The following table collates data on the amount of time, funding, and support schools may need to run Reading Together® effectively. Reading Together® is considered a cost-effective programme to run (Alton-Lee, 2016; Good, 2015; McNaughton et al., 2012). However, schools need to allow money and time to plan and manage the programme. In addition, in some schools, resourcing needs to be sufficient to run several sessions each year. For instance, some schools with well-established programmes run up to four series of workshops each year (Ministry of Education, 2018b). Other schools found it better to run workshops in Terms One, Two and Three (McNaughton et al., 2012).

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES TO RUN THE PROGRAMME	ESTIMATE OF TIME
Engagement with SLT to decide whether to proceed with Reading Together®	Few hours over weeks or months
Engagement with broader teaching staff	Few hours over a couple of months
Engagement with community – level of engagement depends on the relationship with the community	May take weeks or up to 18 months
Senior leadership team attending a seminar about the programme	One day for two or three senior staff (ideally principal, senior leaders and a likely facilitator)
Discussion about the programme with staff while preparing	A couple of hours during staff meetings over a couple of months
Principal and champions building awareness with parents and whānau of the programme and that it will be available soon	One to two days principal time talking with whānau, plus time to liaise with other champions to ensure good support for the first programme.
Reading the <i>Reading Together® Workshop Leader's Handbook</i> (Biddulph, 2019) and preparing for sessions	Three days of workshop facilitator time (there may be two people involved)
Running the sessions	Half a day per session to allow workshop facilitators set up time, liaison and running the session, and feedback to classroom teachers after the session.
Time testing children to assess if their reading levels are improving	This may be built into the normal classroom process or may require resourcing someone to run the tests.
Feedback to all staff about the progress children are making	At staff meetings, so no additional time, but time needs to be made for this.

Previous research (Alton-Lee, 2016; Good 2015; McNaughton et al., 2012; Ministry of Education, 2017b; Oakden and Wehipeihana 2010) suggests ways principals resourced Reading Together® in the past included:

- providing teacher release time for the facilitators running the sessions
- doing some of the administration themselves to keep the workload down for others
- providing transport for parents who needed it – this included pre-arranging some parents to pick up other parents; or involved using a school bus or other school transport (and at times Boards of Trustees took the lead here)
- providing childcare for each session (sometimes they did this themselves, sometimes they got others to do this)
- providing food at sessions – in marae settings, this usually involved a meal that was resourced by the school.

The three [Best Evidence in Action Exemplars](#) on Education Counts provide a resource that explains the critical success factors through the voices of leaders and whānau (Ministry of Education, 2018a, 2018b, 2019).

System opportunities and challenges

A valuable and proven programme the Ministry should continue to champion as a core part of its support to schools and communities



Government and national-level systems that impact on Reading Together®

Key findings

Reading Together® should be part of core service delivery in schools and not at risk of being dropped or compromised due to new policy initiatives or demands.

Reading Together® is a valuable and proven programme the Ministry should continue to champion as a core part of its support to schools and communities (Alton-Lee, 2016). Reading Together® appears to support schools and whānau to build relational trust and whānau engagement in their children's learning (Robinson et al., 2009). It integrates well with other policy initiatives within the Ministry. Therefore, the Ministry has a role in supporting the future expansion (2022 onwards) of Reading Together® (Alton-Lee, 2016; Oakden, 2021).

There is an opportunity for various teams within the Ministry to better connect over Reading Together®. At times in the past, different teams within the Ministry have supported and advocated for the programme (Oakden, 2021; Oakden & Wehipeihana, 2010; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009). However, the programme appears to be undervalued within the wider Ministry. Otherwise, it would be being championed more broadly than it currently is (Oakden, 2021).

Support for Reading Together® needs to be consistent and sustained to embed the Programme based on implementation learnings from 2007–2020. Reading Together® has the potential to be an important means for the Ministry to help schools achieve equity for Māori and Pacific children (Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009; Wehipeihana, 2019).

The Ministry needs to plan and work differently to encourage a “shift in reform ownership” (Coburn, 2003, p. 7) to schools. In planning any Ministry support of the scale out of Reading Together® policymakers need to:

- prioritise the programme and allow schools three to five years to embed it into their systems so successful implementation is possible
- provide ongoing follow-up support for schools where staff turnover or other factors put implementation at risk
- resource a skilled programme implementation team for the duration of the project
- address equity by working in partnership with communities, using a Māori potential approach giving effect to Tino Rangatiratanga and honour Te Tiriti through a genuine partnership with Māori
- identify and support schools most in need of assistance
- provide additional support to schools to collect useable student achievement data
- track implementation to ensure scale out is on track and genuinely addresses equity issues for Māori and Pacific children.

The Ministry implementation team has the potential to work as a system coordinator.

In this role, they could build an infrastructure and network (such as securing input from experienced facilitators of Reading Together® with strong school networks and developing an online portal) to help develop and keep capability in schools and encourage connections within the Ministry.

Lessons from previous scale outs of Reading Together® to schools

Since 2007, the Ministry has provided different coordination and oversight to support schools in setting up and running Reading Together®. There has been long-term support from the Best Evidence Synthesis team, which has provided research to explain the value of Reading Together® to the Ministry policymakers, schools and communities. The team has also fostered a learning relationship with the programme developer (Alton-Lee, 2016). Group Māori (Oakden & Wehipeihana, 2010; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009) and the Parent Information and Community Intelligence team (Oakden, 2021) have also worked to help deliver Reading Together® to Māori and Pacific communities.

IMPLICATION

There is an opportunity for various teams within the Ministry to better connect over Reading Together® (Oakden, 2021; Oakden & Wehipeihana, 2010; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009).

What we know about past project management support

Previously the Ministry managed to scale Reading Together® out to 912 schools between January 2012 and June 2015, of which there were:

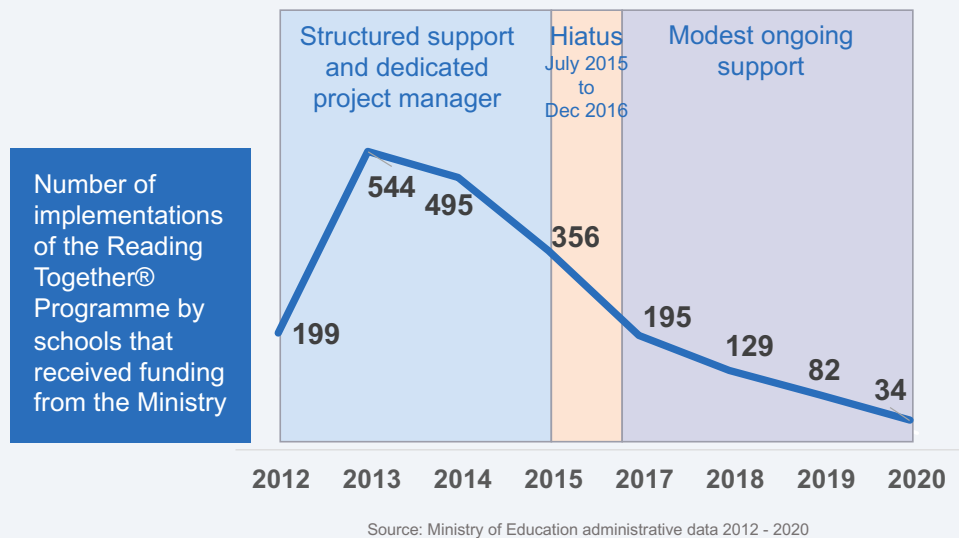
- 505 Decile 1–3 schools (90.5% of the total number of Decile 1–3 schools)
- 303 Decile 4–5 schools (73.4% of the total number of Decile 4–5 schools)
- 105 Decile 6+ schools.

The programme initially attracted substantial Ministry input and dedicated support from a project implementation team. The team included a project manager, help from experts in schools and libraries, and support from 10 lead advisers from the regional offices. However, the programme only retained full support for a year, after which the Ministry set new priorities and the regional support dissipated (Alton-Lee, 2016). For a detailed description of that first year, see the case study on [pages 71–73](#). More recently, between 2018 and 2021, a project coordinator provided contract management support, with limited support from regional teams for schools (Oakden, 2021).

The following chart shows why there is a need for project management oversight of any Reading Together® expansion. The Ministry made good progress rolling out Reading Together® across schools and regions where this support was available.



Need for Ministry of Education support to enable schools to successfully run Reading Together®



However, a “shift in reform ownership” (Coburn, 2003, p. 7) did not occur from the centralised project management team to regional offices and schools. Instead, from 2013, there was a change in education priorities, with Ministry regional staff charged with setting up Kāhui Ako Communities of Schools (Alton-Lee, 2016) and less emphasis on Reading Together®.

Analysis shows the turnover of lead advisers in regional offices was a key inhibitor to delivering Reading Together® at scale. Between 2012 to 2015, there were 34 changes of Reading Together® lead advisers in the 10 regional offices. Two offices had no-one assigned to the lead role in 2013 and 2014 (Alton-Lee, 2016).

The high turnover of lead advisers also meant the Ministry lost much of the institutional knowledge about Reading Together®. Therefore, regional support of implementation did not continue as first planned. The Ministry disestablished the project manager role in 2015 (Alton-Lee, 2016).

From mid-2015 to the end of 2016, there was no project management or coordination support for Reading Together®, and the funding was unused (Alton-Lee, 2016). From 2017, Reading Together® received only modest Ministry support and was without a dedicated project management function. But it did have a project coordinator to oversee contracts. By 2020, Ministry administrative data shows the number of schools applying for funding to offer Reading Together® was down to 34 schools. This signals the programme needs lasting Ministry support to encourage schools to take up and continue using the programme.

IMPLICATIONS

The research suggests that the Ministry needs more than one person to implement and maintain Reading Together®, given its importance. There is a clear need for a skilled programme implementation team. The team should include a project manager with oversight for the programme, Māori and Pacific community engagement expertise, school leadership expertise, library expertise and a project coordinator to run the administrative aspects. This implementation team also needs to draw on local knowledge in the regional Ministry offices, which is critical for effective outreach to schools.

What we know about staff turnover and its impact on the programme

Ministry research shows there is a turnover of one in eight principals leaving schools each year (Jagger, 2020). Therefore, many of the principals involved in earlier offerings of Reading Together® may have left those positions. Primary school teacher turnover rates are one in five each year (Ministry of Education, 2021a). Coupled with principal turnover, this suggests there may be little remaining institutional knowledge of Reading Together® in some schools who ran the programme between 2012–2015.

However, there is also an opportunity for the Ministry. Recent research shows around a third of principals came into their roles in the last five years (Jagger, 2020). Therefore, Reading Together® may be a valuable tool for first-time principals seeking to embed lasting change in their schools.

IMPLICATIONS

The Ministry needs to develop a communication programme that continually promotes Reading Together® to counter the possible ongoing loss of institutional knowledge about the programme in schools.

First-time principals are a sizeable group who may benefit from a targeted Ministry approach about the possible benefits of offering Reading Together® in their schools.

The Ministry may also wish to consider compiling a register of all principals and teachers with experience running Reading Together®. This would help track the workforce available to run sessions. This may also help community providers seeking support from local teachers to run sessions in non-school settings.

Retired principals who have a track record of leading outstanding implementations of Reading Together® may be an invaluable source of support to new principals.

What we know about working with Māori

In the Reading Together® Programme from 2012 to 2014, there was a high engagement of whānau and examples of innovative provision for Māori, including marae-based workshops led out of Fairhaven School (Alton-Lee, 2016). However, there are few school or evaluation reports available from 2015 to 2019 to further explore the engagement of whānau, iwi, hapū or marae. There is only limited reporting in 2020 (Oakden, 2021), and there is little information on the impact of Reading Together® on Māori student achievement.

What we do know, however, is that in early 2016 Waihopai Rūnanga of Ngāi Tahu, Murihiku marae, proposed marae-led provision to enable more rapid and sustainable progress. This is documented in their agreement with the Crown described in *Te Kete o Aoraki*.

In that same year, the Auditor General advised that progress on Ka Hikitia, the Māori education strategy, was too slow and that a “proven value-building activity” (Alton-Lee, 2016, p. 71) such as Reading Together® could be useful to build relationships with whānau and iwi.

A successful case was made to the Minister to change the appropriation to enable a shift of emphasis in March 2017. Groups other than schools were then able to deliver Reading Together® in alternative settings, such as iwi groups and Pacific groups in March 2017 (Alton-Lee, 2018).

In 2020, there was low engagement from Māori, with only five Māori-led Reading Together® initiatives funded by the Ministry (Oakden, 2021). While COVID-19 made 2020 an unusual year, the low Māori participation does not reflect the longer-term political interest and support from Māori leaders. The Māori party (2011–2014) and Ngai Tahu (2015–2016) have previously expressed strong support for Reading Together® (Alton-Lee, 2016).

IMPLICATIONS

Reading Together® provides a significant opportunity for the Ministry to progress the objectives of Ka Hikitia. This is also an opportunity for the Ministry to prioritise honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi by partnering with Māori communities to organise and deliver Reading Together®.

What we know about working with the Pacific peoples

Over the past three years, the Ministry's strategic work with Pacific communities has helped improve access to Reading Together® in those communities. Facilitators have run workshops in churches and other community settings rather than in schools (Oakden, 2021). In 2020, 64 Reading Together® programmes ran in Pacific churches and community settings. As nearly two-thirds (64%) of the parents and whānau attended all four sessions at programmes run in church and community settings, the evaluators judged the approach successful (Oakden, 2021).

IMPLICATIONS

Pacific communities have engaged with the Ministry and supported running Reading Together® in their churches and other community settings as well as in schools. At times, the school setting is not as easy for parents and whānau to access as a community setting. Therefore, it makes sense to offer Reading Together® both in schools and other settings.

What we know from collaborating with the Department of Corrections to run Reading Together® in prisons

Ara Poutama Aotearoa | Department of Corrections worked with the Storytime Foundation to offer an adaptive early Reading Together® and Reading Together® for parents in prisons. This initiative delivered wellbeing for both parents and children (Woodley, 2018, 2021).

This initiative delivered wellbeing for both parents and children

IMPLICATIONS

With care, it is possible to deliver Reading Together® in diverse settings. Parents and children benefit when parents in prison have access to Reading Together®. This example also models the Ministry working with another agency to support outreach to a community that might normally miss out on Reading Together®.

Leverage what works to help scale out

The research suggests core strategies the Ministry can adopt to help scale out the programme to leverage what works. These include:

- work in partnership with communities using a Māori potential approach
- develop a deep understanding of schools' readiness to run Reading Together®
- ensure children have access to a wide range of suitable books and resources
- support continuous learning in scaling up the programme.

Work in partnership with communities using a Māori potential approach

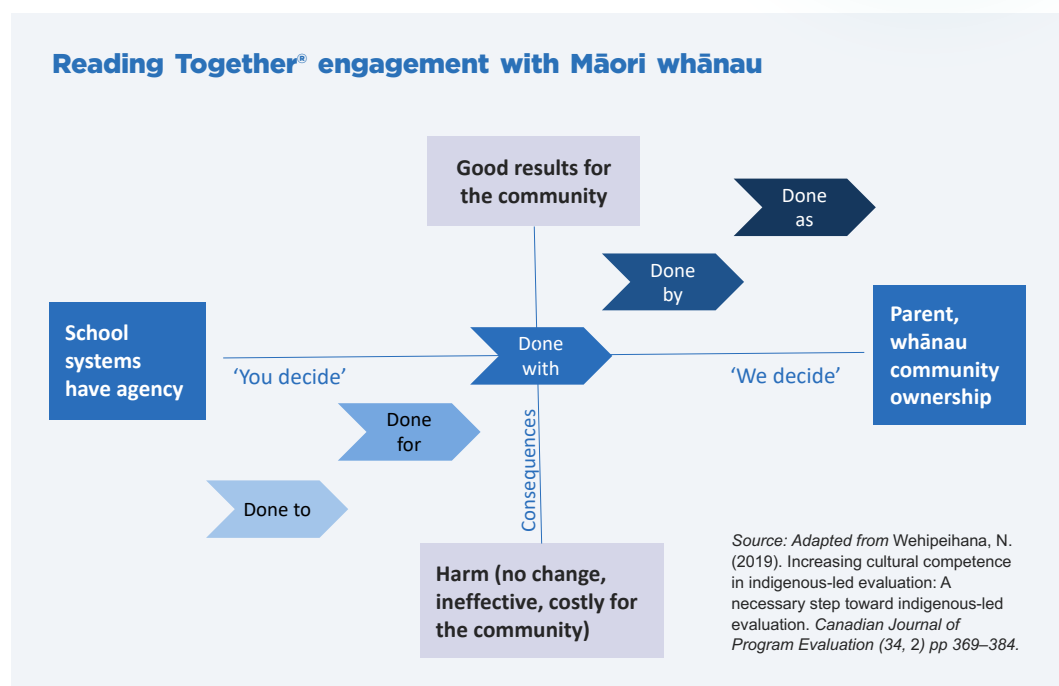
There is an emerging trend for government agencies to work in non-traditional settings to reach those most in need (Oakden, Walton, & Foote, 2020), including in Māori settings (Wehipeihana, Sebire, Spee & Oakden, 2021) and Pacific settings (Oakden & Spee, 2020). The Ministry's more recent support of Reading Together® both in schools and in community settings makes sense (Alton-Lee, 2016; Oakden, 2021).

Māori evaluator, Nan Wehipeihana (2019) suggests five ways of working with Māori and Pacific people that can range from helpful to harming. The following principles inform her framing:

"The principle of Tino Rangatiratanga (chiefly leadership)...appears in ...[Te Tiriti o Waitangi] signed by the British Crown and rangatira (chiefs) in 1840. Tino Rangatiratanga has come to be understood as a translation for the term "self-determination" and refers to determination by Māori of issues that have an impact on Māori. Tino Rangatiratanga has been at the forefront of Māori aspirations since the signing of the treaty in 1840 and remains so today"

(Wehipeihana, 2019, p. 372–373)

"Tino Rangatiratanga has been at the forefront of Māori aspirations since the signing of the treaty in 1840 and remains so today."



Tino Rangatiratanga is the right for Māori to exercise their authority and agency in areas such as education and provide culturally responsive and inclusive opportunities. In the “done as” space, Māori or Pacific parents, whānau and the community have ownership over the programme delivery to meet their needs. Schools and the Ministry support their ambitions and resource them adequately. This approach has Tiriti-based foundations where parents, whānau and community are self-determining. Thus, this approach to equity embraces a Treaty-based perspective. Wehipeihana (2019) suggests Māori and Pacific thrive most in this “done as” space where:

... *Indigenous peoples have control over the [programme], and Indigenous knowledge and science are the norm. The legitimacy and validity of Indigenous principles, values are taken for granted. It does not exclude Western methods but includes them only as far as they are seen to be useful.*

(Wehipeihana, 2019, p. 381)

In the “done with” and “done by” spaces, the Ministry and school, in partnership with parents, whānau and the community, share power to find the best way forward together. This approach affirms Māori and Pacific parents’ aspirations – and power is shared between parents, whānau and the community with the school or the Ministry.

The “done to” or “done for”, space recognises that schools and the Ministry can cause unintended harm when engaging with Māori and Pacific parents, whānau and community. Where schools do not engage in a self-determining way for Māori and Pacific, programme delivery may not be effective and may cause harm. An example is inviting parents and whānau by letter to participate in workshops without prior discussion. If the invitation is off-putting to the adults, the child might miss the programme’s potential benefits.

IMPLICATIONS

Honouring Te Tiriti through a genuine partnership with Māori is essential for the continued success of Reading Together®

Genuine partnerships are needed between the Ministry, hapū, iwi, and Māori to support Tino Rangatiratanga. Tino Rangatiratanga is the right for Māori to exercise their authority and agency in education and provide opportunities that are culturally responsive and inclusive.

The Ministry can take a leadership role in building awareness and operationalising Reading Together®, including sharing insights from successful culturally responsive implementation to enable broader uptake and delivery by Māori.

To support hapū, iwi, and Māori to develop and lead culturally responsive, kaupapa Māori pathways within education services the Ministry can explore procurement, contracting and support processes to enable meaningful partnerships.

Tino Rangatiratanga
is the right for Māori to exercise their authority and agency in education and provide opportunities that are culturally responsive and inclusive.

Develop a deep understanding of school readiness

In expanding Reading Together®, the Ministry also needs to better understand schools' readiness and the likely nature of support required by schools (Oakden & Wehipeihana, 2010). Previous research found schools have variable capability to run Reading Together®.

In the past, schools most likely to take up Reading Together® viewed the programme as “a solution to a current challenge or issue” (Oakden & Wehipeihana, 2010, p. 31). This might be: a school-wide focus on building literacy, wanting to build home and school partnerships, or supporting community wellbeing after a critical event or natural disaster.

The Manurewa pilot modelled a way of assessing likely support needed by schools (Oakden & Wehipeihana, 2010). In that instance, a Ministry pouwhakataki assessed schools' possible need for support by:

- reviewing observations about whānau engagement in past Education Review Office reports
- speaking with Ministry staff who regularly visited each school
- talking with whānau from the school community.

Recording reading progress is essential to ensure the needed gains happen (Alton-Lee, 2016). Some schools did not systematically collect data or store it in student management systems to track progress (Evaluation Associates, 2010; McNaughton et al., 2012; Oakden & Wehipeihana, 2010; Wehipeihana & Oakden, 2009). Therefore, these schools may need added capacity building and support to help them generate “useable student achievement data” (McNaughton et al., 2012, p. 20). This extra support implementing student management systems may be outside the scope of the Reading Together® expansion.



*In expanding Reading Together®,
the Ministry also needs to better understand schools' readiness and the likely nature of support required by schools*

IMPLICATIONS

The Ministry needs adequate resources to develop a deep understanding of school readiness and to provide appropriate support to schools to expand Reading Together®. This is likely to include obtaining information from regional Ministry teams.

As well, additional support in developing student management systems may be needed. This support may be outside the scope of Reading Together® contracts with schools.

Broker children's access to books

Research shows that children need access to books of their own that they can read for pleasure (see pages 12–13). Children need books that reflect the cultures, identities and languages of their whānau – including books in te reo Māori and Pacific languages. However, access to books is declining for some groups of children, particularly Pacific and Māori children (see page 13). Research suggests the Ministry has a role in supporting schools' access to books and other reading material (Alton-Lee, 2016). To ensure children have continued access to books, the Ministry needs to maintain relationships with:

- the National Library, which has a dedicated page on Reading Together® and the ways they can support schools called *Reading Together® Te Pānui Ngātahi programme / Services to Schools* (National Library, n.d.)
- local libraries who provide support to schools and parents and whānau to ensure schools have access to a wide range of books to support learners
- the National Book Council and Duffy Books with whom there are existing relationships, to support accessing a wide range of print media for parents, whānau and children.

The Ministry may need to undertake additional relationship-building to support communities offering the programme in settings other than schools to access books for the children.

IMPLICATIONS

The Ministry has a role in brokering with other organisations to ensure that all children have access to books they can read at home for pleasure. There are several organisations the programme implementation team needs to collaborate with to ensure the continued support of libraries and other organisations who can access books for children without them.

Support continuous learning in scaling up

Develop a new implementation logic

Previous research also identified the need for the Ministry to regularly reassess and revitalise the implementation logic for Reading Together® (Alton-Lee, 2016). This need is even more pressing now, given the changed context since the last major scale up between 2012 and 2015. The continuous learning model used in PowerUP to Talanoa Ako and in Ao Lotu is an important model that also provides lessons for school-parent partnerships (Fairburn-Dunlop, 2021; Oakden & Spee, 2020). As part of developing a new plan for implementing Reading Together®, a new implementation logic would include the needs of diverse service providers of Reading Together® including schools, community settings (Oakden, 2021) and prisons (Woodley, 2018, 2021).

*A new
implementation
logic would include
**the needs of
diverse service
providers***

Evaluate the implementation of Reading Together® as a system not just at the school level

A previous scale up report identified the need for ongoing evaluation to assess implementation progress, both the outcomes for children, parents and whānau – and for the Ministry and schools and regional teams (Oakden & Wehipeihana, 2010). This need still exists. It will be important for schools and senior advisers from the regional offices to share learnings about what works in their local conditions.

A review of the existing research and evaluations identified a current evaluation gap – assessing the system implementation. For example, some schools may be running the programme without applying for funding. Therefore, the Ministry does not currently know how many schools are still delivering Reading Together® (Oakden, 2021), nor the number of skilled workshop facilitators available in schools or supporting delivery in the wider community.

Support schools to use action research to assess implementation

The creators of the Reading Together® programme have worked with schools using action research as they run the programme. The programme creators' approach helps assess how well schools are running the programme.

Support schools to decide how to evaluate student progress

In evaluating student progress, schools may need support to determine what approach they might use. Some schools may elect to use “rigorous experimental designs” (McNaughton et al., p. 12). However, in selecting a method, a school should also choose one that is realistic and feasible (Sullivan et al., 2009).

Allow enough time for continuous learning

As noted earlier (Alton-Lee, 2016), a Ministry team with Reading Together® expertise is needed to support schools. Therefore, the Ministry needs a plan to support the delivery of Reading Together®. There will be a need for constant support for schools, until there is widespread knowledge and understanding of the programme. We suggest the next scale up needs a larger, dedicated team for longer than in the past.

IMPLICATIONS

There are many aspects to continuous learning for improvement. The Ministry implementation team has the potential to do system coordination. In this role they could build an infrastructure and network (such as an online portal) to help develop and retain capability in schools – and encourage connections within the Ministry.

There is a need to:

- develop and share a new implementation logic, so there is a shared understanding about what Reading Together® does and how to access support to run it
- undertake research and evaluation that tracks the extended implementation and impact on a range of stakeholders
- support schools to monitor and track student progress and share results with parents, whānau and the community.

Implementation case study

Description of early Ministry implementation of Reading Together® to scale 2012 and 2013

This section describes the Ministry's support for implementing Reading Together® during the scale up in 2012 and 2013. A dedicated project manager ran the Reading Together® project from July 2011 to June 2015.

The team that supported the implementation

The team initially involved in implementing Reading Together® included a project manager, senior advisers from ten regional Ministry offices, a school principal, and a librarian.

Project initiation

The project manager ran briefings for all the school teams at the ten regional Ministry offices from the second half of 2011. These briefings outlined Reading Together® and its outcomes. The sessions also described the role of the regional teams. Each Ministry office appointed a Lead Reading Together® Senior Adviser (lead adviser), who held this role along with their other everyday responsibilities. The project manager linked to the lead advisers in each office.

Setting up briefing meetings with schools

The lead advisers contacted target schools (largely Decile 1–3), inviting senior leaders to a meeting to consider setting up and running Reading Together® in their schools. The lead advisers set up these meetings.

Running school briefing meetings

The project manager, a school principal and a librarian ran the meetings. The school principal had experience running Reading Together®, and a librarian came from a community that already supported the programme. In the first part of 2012, the project manager, a school principal and a librarian toured the country. These three people led the briefing meetings using a PowerPoint presentation (Good, 2015) and handout notes (Ministry of Education, 2017b). Note: These materials could be considered smart tools the Ministry might further adapt for future expansion.

Resources offered to schools taking up Reading Together®

For the first round of school meetings, schools who decided to take up Reading Together® received:

- funding to cover five teacher release days to prepare to run the programme
- \$1500 to support whānau engagement
- one or more *Reading Together® Workshop Leader's Handbooks* (Biddulph, 2019) depending on the school size
- sufficient Reading Together® handout resources to cover two to three years of implementation
- advice from the lead adviser and the project manager as needed
- access to a 'support desk' with the Biddulph Group, where individual schools could have online interaction with the programme developers Jeanne (or Chris) Biddulph if they had any queries (this was later discontinued due to low demand)
- support from the National Library– the library offered an extended loan for a set of books specially targeted to the associated children
- a further \$500 for schools that implemented Reading Together® into a second year, to aid further whānau engagement
- access to books to give to children.

The project manager also built relationships with other organisations

In 2012, the project manager also developed a connection between the Ministry and the National Library. A representative from the National Library came to many of the briefing meetings where several schools attended but did not come to briefings for individual schools.

The project manager also strengthened access to books for parents, whānau, and children. The project manager forged relationships with the National Book Council, Duffy Books and Learning Media for the Ministry. These relationship-building activities enabled the Ministry to access a wide range of print media for parents, whānau, and children. At the end of 2012, the Ministry bought many books for the individual regional offices to give to the schools taking part. This helped to improve some children's access to books.

Feedback from schools

The Ministry sought simple reports as feedback from schools. Schools sent the reports to the lead advisers, who sent them on to the project manager. Based on recommended questions in the *Reading Together® Workshop Leader's Handbook* (Biddulph, 2019), two types of feedback were provided by schools.

- **An attendance sheet** (without names). This sheet captured attendance across the workshops, parent/whānau relationship to the child, parent/whānau ethnicity. Attendance data enabled the lead advisers and project manager to assess first whether the programme attracted the intended parents and whānau and second whether parents and whānau attended all four sessions.
- **Participants' responses** to the feedback questions. The responses allowed the lead advisers and the project manager to check that parents received the intended key messages during the sessions, which they did.

From the second half of 2012 to 2015, the lead adviser in each region identified a local school leader already carrying out Reading Together® and a local librarian to attend the school briefing sessions. Each year, the project manager visited each region to follow up and brief new Ministry staff. From 2012 to the start of 2015, there were 34 different Reading Together® lead advisers across ten regional offices, an exceptionally high turnover rate. As well, two offices did not have a lead adviser in 2013 and 2014.

The project manager also expected that Reading Together® lead advisers would soon start running briefing meetings themselves, but this did not occur. Instead, the lead advisers preferred the more experienced project manager to run the sessions.

Based on accounts by Alton-Lee (2016), Madden and Madden (2014a, 2014b, 2015b) and Good (2021, personal communication).

Appendices



Appendix A: Detailed research approach

Background

The Ministry received \$11.6m in the 2021 budget to expand Reading Together® Te Pānui Ngātahi (Reading Together®) and Duffy Books in Homes. The funding aims to “improve literacy and wellbeing outcomes for over 73,000 children across New Zealand by giving 37,000 parents effective strategies to support their children as they learn to read.” (Ministry of Education, 2021b).

Schools offer Reading Together® to a group of parents and whānau as a series of four one-and-a-quarter-hour workshops over seven weeks. At the second workshop, a child attends with parents and whānau to try some of the suggested ideas. The facilitator also helps parents and whānau link with the local community library enabling parents and whānau to access more reading resources.

When parents and whānau attend Reading Together®, there is strong evidence of multiple valued outcomes for the whole whānau. From attending Reading Together®, changes occur quickly in the way parents and whānau support their child's reading and family dynamics. Children make rapid progress in their reading, become more confident readers and engage more in learning. The programme also provides professional development in relationship building and improving reading outcomes. Principals, senior leadership teams and teachers benefit when school leaders adopt a whole-school approach to implementing Reading Together®.

The programme is proven to improve reading outcomes for children, build better home-school partnerships, and strengthen teacher practice in reading. When implemented well, Reading Together® is cost-effective. However, research shows sub-optimal implementation may mean the gains are not maximised.

Since 2007, the Ministry of Education has supported schools to run Reading Together®. More recently, the Ministry extended Reading Together® into community settings, which are a valuable addition to the offering in schools and as a driver of system learning about strengthening cultural responsiveness. However, this report focuses on delivering Reading Together® in school settings.

Research objectives

The Ministry contracted Pragmatica Limited to create an action-oriented summary of key findings from 38 years of research and evaluation to guide the effective implementation of the programme going forward. The objectives of this action-oriented summary were to describe in school settings:

- the outcomes for all the key stakeholders engaged in the Reading Together®
- what works and how it works for effective implementation of Reading Together®
- the system challenges and opportunities of implementing Reading Together®.

Research methodology

The research design draws on the strategies identified in the Best Evidence Synthesis as good practice in school leadership (Robinson et al., 2009) and, to a lesser extent on teacher professional development (Timperley et al., 2007).

The research drew on a wide range of existing information as data including:

- existing Best Evidence Synthesis findings that relate to the Reading Together® programme
- early literature that informed the original design of the Reading Together® programme
- 16 published and unpublished research or evaluation reports about Reading Together®
- administrative data or internal Ministry reports about implementing and uptake of Reading Together®
- personal communication with key Ministry staff involved in scaling Reading Together® in the past.

Framing for this research

This action-oriented summary draws on the following ways of thinking and working to provide a unique perspective on ways of implementing Reading Together® in the future:

- Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) methodology
- a Māori and Pacific potential approach
- existing implementation research for system improvement and capability building
- a complexity framing to deal with the complex nature of school implementation and used some methods and models that help grapple with complexity.

Best Evidence Synthesis methodology

This research draws on a whole system approach based on the Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) methodology (Alton-Lee, 2004b). The Ministry has invested in BES since 2003 as a system lever for change. BES aims to “systematically identify, evaluate, analyse, synthesise, and make accessible, relevant evidence linked to a range of learner outcomes” (Alton-Lee, 2004b, p. 2).

What sets BES apart is the relentless checking of whether there are unintended outcomes associated with good intentions (Alton-Lee, 2004a). This includes checking whether the outcomes experienced by children align with policy intentions. From the start, particular weight was given to long-term evidence of improved outcomes across multiple valued outcomes, with wellbeing central to BES.

Systems challenges include finding ways for the Ministry to lead and support delivering Reading Together® at scale while working jointly with other government agencies. At this level, the Ministry’s role is to offer “strategic system resourcing, leadership and stewardship for ongoing improvement” (Alton-Lee, 2016, p. 5).

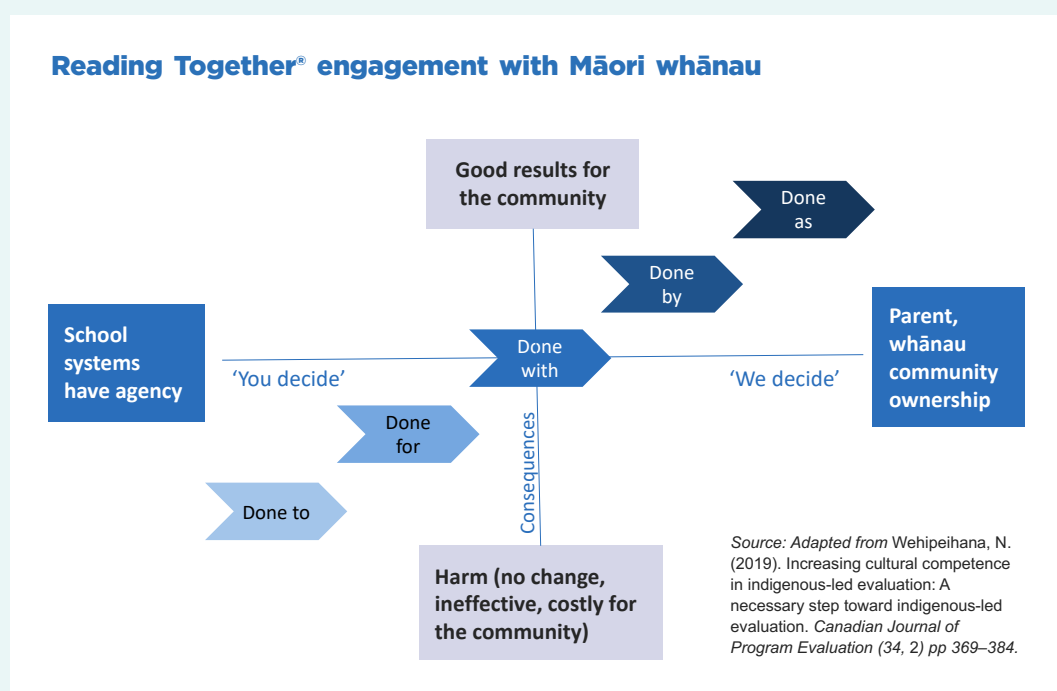
In addition, those leading the Reading Together® scale up work need to know how the programme works, the likely challenges, and how to strengthen delivery at scale within schools (Alton-Lee, 2016, Oakden & Wehipeihana, 2010). Therefore, this research explores the inter-relationship between findings of what makes a bigger difference in education across multiple valued outcomes – equity, excellence, belonging and wellbeing and emerging theories. It seeks to proactively discover what does and does not work for Reading Together®, what makes a bigger difference, how and why?

The underlying premise of this report is that essential contributors to improving outcomes for learners are:

- effective school leadership and governance
- expert professional learning support for educational change
- quality teaching
- parent, whānau and community and whānau relationships with schools
- effective system support
- research on valued outcomes for learners and whānau (Alton-Lee, 2004b).

Used a Māori potential approach

This research includes a Māori and Pacific potential approach. Wehipeihana (2019) suggests that programmes can support Māori and Pacific to be self-determining and act with authority and independence. A Māori potential approach will ensure that Māori and Pacific values and knowledge are acknowledged and inclusive in any programme. Programmes that work well when involving Māori and Pacific are ‘Done with, Done by and Done as.’ These approaches ensure that Māori and Pacific decide and have ownership over any programmes or initiatives that impact them.



How might this look when a Māori or Pacific potential Reading Together® approach is practised? In some schools, Reading Together® provides for shared discussions about the best venue to hold sessions. Schools are culturally responsive in planning and resourcing sessions. Discussions are specific to the needs of Māori and Pacific whānau. Whānau receives affirmation that they have an essential and rightful role in their children’s education. They build their knowledge to work in partnership with their children’s schools to ensure their children reach their potential. Parents become more powerful as they learn of ways to engage and form partnerships with the school. Parents come to see themselves as part of the solution.

Drew on existing implementation research

We also drew on existing implementation research in framing this action-oriented summary. Cynthia Coburn's (2003) seminal work on scaling reform, notes that schools navigate "complex challenges" (p. 2) to implement change. Coburn suggests successful change makers address four types of change: depth, sustainability, spread and a shift in reform ownership. Those implementing Reading Together® between 2012 and 2015 found Coburn's (2003) framing useful as it proposed strong evidence should drive theoretical development.

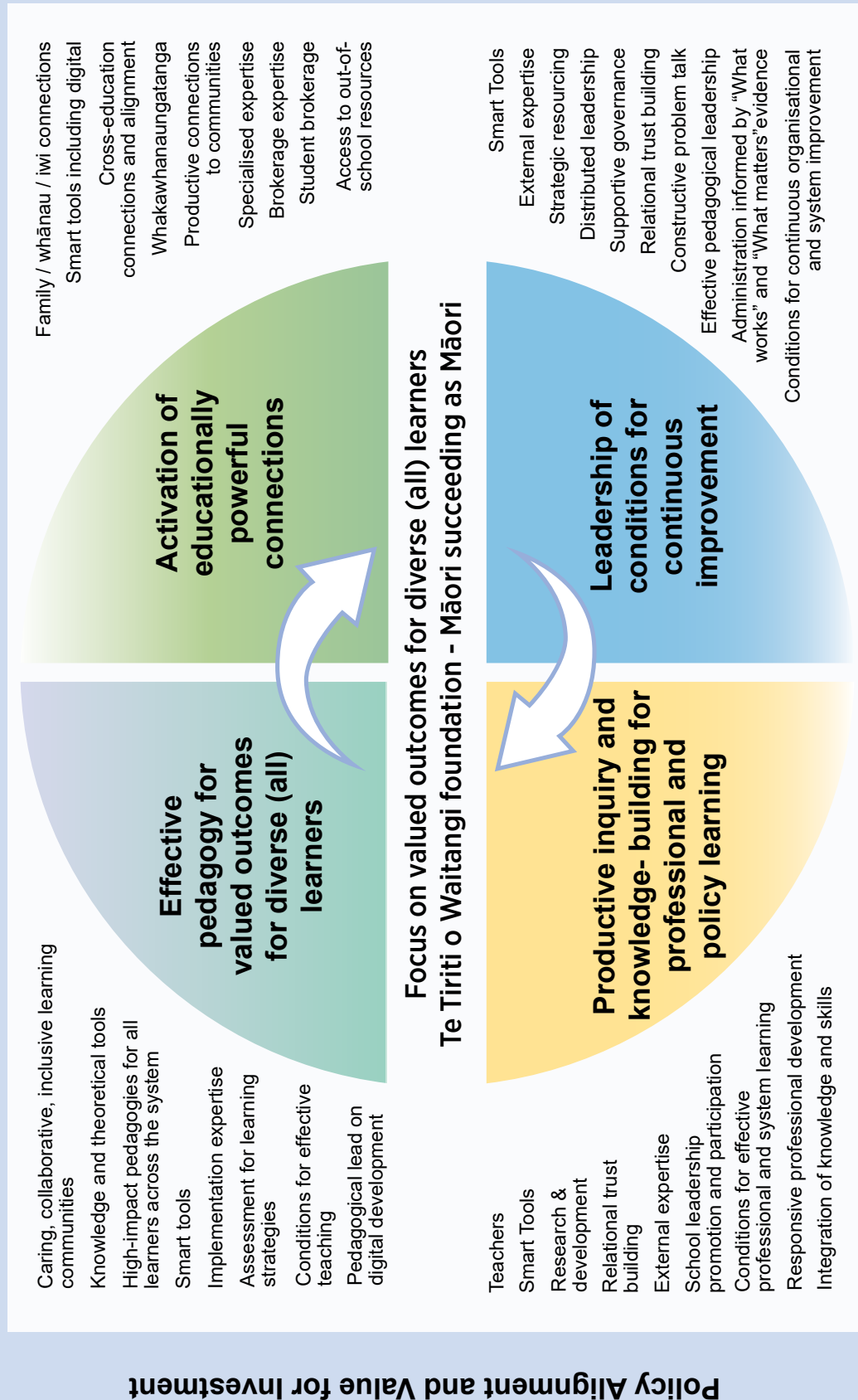
In this report we consider first, within schools the lessons in setting up and running Reading Together®, looking at depth of implementation and sustainability. Second, we also look at the broader systems implications of offering Reading Together® and how Coburn's criteria of spread and shift in reform ownership might occur.

Recent research by Mireille Hubers (2020), describes a long-standing tension in implementation between seeking fidelity and allowing for local adaptations. Hubers sees sustainable change as a "process of individual and organizational learning as well as of changing behaviours at both the individual and organizational levels" (2020, p. 6). When school leaders see educational change occurs at both personal and organisational levels, they better understand the mechanisms involved. Hubers encourages educators to adopt an "intentional, effortful and enduring" (2020, p. 6) approach to creating change. Huber's proposed learning and adapting philosophy aligns with the *School leadership and student outcomes: What works and why: BES* (Robinson et al., 2009).

This work also draws on the idea of *improvement science* (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2021) in education, which focuses on continually improving the ways teaching and learning occurs in schools. The following diagram shows the Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis Programme Hei Kete Raukura *System improvement and capability-building agenda diagram* in English and in Te Reo, which provides an overview of the areas of improvement being focussed on.

Productive Communities of Learning and Networks

System Improvement and Capability-Building Agenda

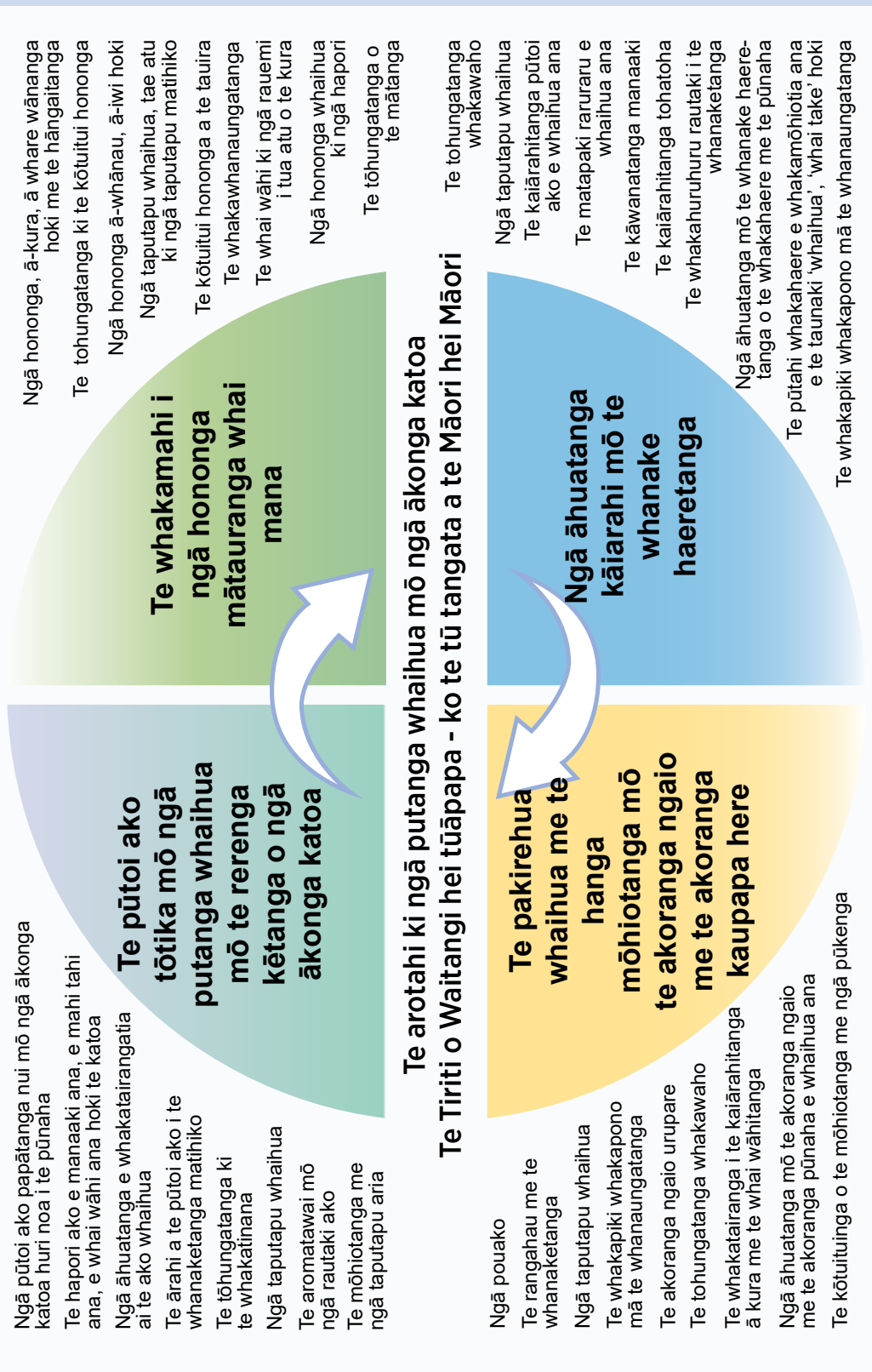


Strategic, collaborative R & D driving high-impact innovation and effective implementation

Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis Programme Hei Kete Raukura | Ministry of Education Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga | www.educationcounts.govt.nz/goto/BES March 2017

Te Kaupapa Whakanikoniko Pūnaha Me Te Whakawhanake Matatautanga

Te Hāngaitanga o te Kaupapa Here me te Whai Hua i te Whakapaunga Rawa



Te Rangahau me te Whanaketanga mahi Ngātahi, Whai Rautaki Hoki e Kōkiri ana i te Auahatanga Papātanga nui me te Whakatinanatanga Whaihua



Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis Programme He Keite Raukura | Ministry of Education Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga | www.educationcounts.govt.nz/goto/BES | June 2014

Improvement science supports normative change within the systems, such as the Ministry and schools implementing Reading Together®. Improvement science suggests that a programme like Reading Together® should focus on a common aim, and ensure policymakers have a deep understanding of the problems the system produces. Strong improvement methods drive progress to improve and speed up interventions into school settings. A strong example of ongoing evidence of improvement is described in Tagaloatele Professor Fairburn-Dunlop's overview of PowerUP and Talanoa Ako (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2021), which has links with Reading Together® in the community. The implementation research that informed the implementation of Reading Together® (Coburn, 2003) and, more recently (Hubers, 2020), also has a complexity framing.

Used a complexity framing

We are experiencing a whole new era of radical uncertainty emanating from COVID-19. The uncertainties include managing transmission, the impact on communities, and the best policy response options. This means decisionmakers are navigating more complex and interdependent challenges than in the past.

This action-oriented summary draws on systems thinking and complexity framing to frame and structure the analysis, synthesis and reporting. From the start, the Best Evidence Synthesis has drawn on a complexity framing as a way of thinking about implementation (Biddulph et al., 2003; Robinson et al., 2009; Timperley et al., 2007).

Public services, such as education, are complex adaptive systems (Eppel et al., 2011; Eppel & Karacaoglu, 2017; Haynes, 2015). Therefore, a complexity framing can help develop policy and implementation approaches.

In 2003, BES defined complex adaptive systems as “spontaneous, unpredictable and volatile, self-organising, self-maintaining, dynamic and adaptive” (Biddulph et al., 2003, p. 12). This definition is still relevant today (Byrne & Callaghan, 2014; Haynes, 2015, Eppel & Rhodes, 2018).

What is important about a complexity framing is that it contrasts with a traditional Newtonian framing of science (Byrne & Callaghan, 2014). The more traditional approach assumes “mechanical, cause and effect processes in which fundamental parts of a system can be identified and predictions made about their behaviours under certain conditions” (Biddulph et al., 2003, p. 12). Haynes (2015) has cautioned against “a false and over-simplification of process and outcomes “ (p. 81). He suggests there is often a focus on counting deliverables – for instance, the number of parents who attend a workshop, rather than discovering whether parents and children benefited from the programme.

A complexity framing focuses on encouraging trusted relationships and continuing to learn based on effective information collecting and sharing. Recent research into using complexity framing in public policy settings in New Zealand (Oakden et al., 2020) aligns with the findings of Coburn (2003) and Hubers (2020) and suggests it is important to:

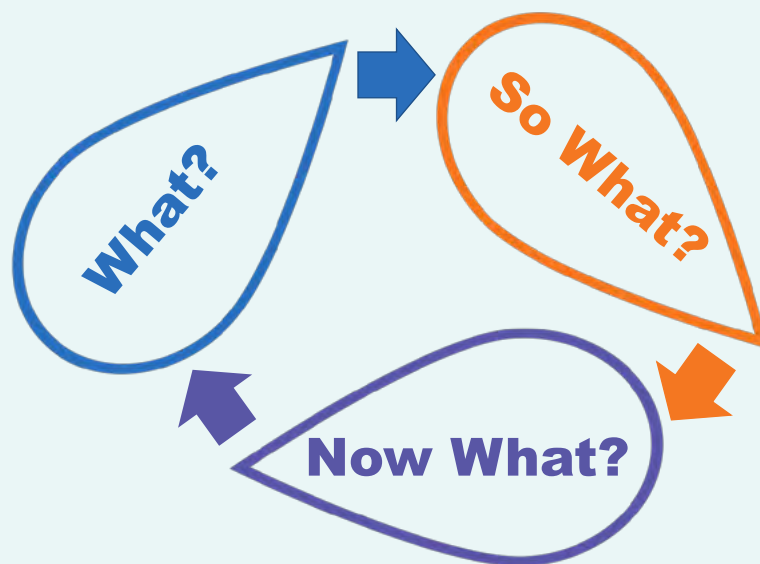
- build effective relationships – for example, between school leaders and parents and whānau, and between home and school
- share knowledge and learning
- share power of decision making with the community
- take a longer-term approach to investing and learning about successful initiatives.

Use of Human Systems Dynamics methods and models

This action-oriented summary also used Human Systems Dynamics methods and models (Eoyang & Holladay, 2013; Eoyang & Oakden, 2016), which are smart tools, to help navigate complexity. The methods and models used in this research include:

- **cycles of adaptive action** as a way of moving from reflection to action
- **standing in inquiry** to reflect openly on the aspects that did and did not work well
- **pattern spotting** to identify the patterns emerging from the different providers delivery of the programme, and parents and children's responses to service delivery.

Cycles of adaptive action: Each adaptive action cycle in the programme supports Reading Together® participants to move through the processes of sensing, transforming and acting. At the ‘What’ part of the cycle, participants consider new ways of thinking about learning or further information about the education system. At the ‘So What’ part of the cycle, participants consider possible changes and courses of action. At the ‘Now What’ stage of the process, participants experiment with different ways of doing things and choose possible pathways to the future.



Early writing on *What, So What, Now What* (Borton, 1970, p. 86) suggested that the process is useful from both a parent and child perspective. It helps them “learn how to develop alternative [ways] for handling themselves, other people and their environment so they can increase the personal options open to them” (Borton, 1970, p. 86). The process is also helpful in teaching and learning from a teacher’s perspective to “find out what particular content reaches students and then teach so as to expand their understanding” (Borton, 1970, p. 86).

Used in complex settings (Eoyang & Holladay, 2013) and evaluation (Eoyang & Oakden, 2016) the *What, So What, Now What* process is described as an adaptive action cycle. The research team saw the Ministry of Education used many adaptive action cycles at multiple levels of implementation of the programme to benefit all involved. Using adaptive action cycles has helped the Ministry and providers grapple with a range of delivery challenges over the years. Most recently, an adaptive action cycle has informed the extension of Reading Together® into community settings. Importantly it leads to systematic learning and practice. The approach has also been used to synthesise and report this action-oriented summary.

It appears that in Reading Together® a reflective approach using adaptive action cycles also helped shift parents’ and children’s behaviours and attitudes. Parents gained a greater understanding of how to support their children’s learning. Children gained a better understanding of the importance of reading and learned how to read.

The Reading Together® programme has evolved over time. The Ministry team is committed to testing different approaches to ensure that as many parents and whānau as possible have access to the programme. At times responses are unexpected or some schools experience more success than others, and the Ministry team constantly seeks to learn from both the successes and challenges that occur.

Standing in inquiry: This idea from Human Systems Dynamics – is a suggested way of being in complex settings. Standing in inquiry is a way of engaging with the world that allows people to remain open in ambiguous settings rather than becoming closed and defensive. This stance is useful when surprises occur for which people do not necessarily have the answers. Standing in inquiry calls on people to ask questions instead of making assumptions, be curious rather than judgemental, explore rather than argue, and be self-reflective rather than defensive (Eoyang & Holladay, 2013). It is a useful stance to take when doing adaptive action cycles. It helps generate new ideas for deciding what to do next.

Pattern spotting: This process originates from Phil Capper and Bob Williams (2004). It is a powerful tool for making sense in complex and challenging situations that has been adopted as part of the Human Systems Dynamics (HSD) method where it is described there as “Pattern Spotting” (Eoyang & Holladay, 2013). It is powerful because with five simple questions people can come together and explore data to uncover first, what is happening in general, and second to identify any exceptions. Third, contradictions are identified (on the one hand but on the other). Fourth, surprising aspects that are either present or not present are tabled. Finally, participants discuss what still puzzles them. This process helped the researchers make sense of at times, contradictory information in writing this action-oriented summary.

A range of data was used for this research

No new data were collected to develop this action-oriented summary. For this action-oriented summary, the range of data used included 23 different reports and evaluations, five administrative data sets, and a range of literature that informs implementation and scaling up. The information used is outlined in the table below:

TYPE OF DATA	LIST OF DOCUMENTS
Early literature used in the original design of the Reading Together® programme	<p>Biddulph, J. (1983). <i>A group programme to train parents of children with reading difficulties to tutor their children at home</i>. MA Research Report. Christchurch: University of Canterbury.</p> <p>Biddulph, J., & Tuck, B. (1983). <i>Assisting parents to help their children with reading at home</i>. Paper presented to the annual NZARE conference. Wellington.</p> <p>Biddulph J. (1993) <i>Teacher-parent partnership to support children's reading development</i>. Paper presented to the New Zealand Reading Association Annual Conference, Christchurch, May 1993.</p>

Existing Best Evidence Synthesis that relates to the Reading Together® programme

Alton-Lee, A. (2004a). *Improving educational policy and practice through an Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis Programme*. Paper prepared for OECD-US Seminar, Evidence-based Policy Research, April 19-20, 2004, Washington D.C

Alton-Lee, A., Robinson, V., Hohepa, M., & Lloyd, C. (2009). *Creating educationally powerful connections with family, whānau, and communities. Creating educationally powerful connections with family, whānau, and communities*. Chapter 7. School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why: Best evidence synthesis iteration. Wellington: Ministry of Education. Retrieved February 16, 2019, from Education Counts: https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/60188/Chapter-7-redacted.pdf

Alton-Lee, A. (2016). *Interventions database: BES effectiveness report: Reading Together® Iteration 18*. Unpublished report on the policy status of Reading Together® and evidence about effectiveness of implementation in New Zealand prepared for the Education System Policy Interventions Database. Iterative BES Programme |Hei Kete Raukura. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Ministry of Education. (2018a). *Reading Together® Te Pānui Ngātahi: Implementation for impact and enduring, reciprocal high trust relationships between families, whānau and schools. Manurewa Central School*. Retrieved from <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/topics/BES/reading-together-te-panui-ngatahi>

Ministry of Education. (2018b). *Reading Together® Te Pānui Ngātahi: Implementation for impact and enduring, reciprocal high trust relationships between families, whānau and schools. St Joseph's School Otahuhu*. Retrieved from <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/topics/BES/reading-together-te-panui-ngatahi>

Ministry of Education. (2019). *Reading Together® Te Pānui Ngātahi at Ngāti Moko Marae: A school-iwi partnership implementation exemplar: Fairhaven School-Iwi partnership*. Retrieved from <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/topics/BES/reading-together-te-panui-ngatahi/fairhaven-school>

Tuck, B., Horgan, L., Franich, C., & Wards, M. (2007). *School leadership in a school-home partnership: Reading Together® at St Joseph's School Otahuhu*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Robinson, V., Hohepa, M., & Lloyd, C. (2009). *School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why: Best evidence synthesis iteration*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Timperley, H., Wilson, A., Barrar, H., & Fung, I. (2007). *Teacher professional learning and development: Best evidence synthesis iteration*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Timperley, H. (2008). *Teacher professional learning and development: Educational practices-18*. Geneva: International Academy of Education.

<p>Published research or evaluation reports about Reading Together®</p>	<p>Madden, F., & Madden, R. (2013). <i>Reading Together® project 2012 - Analysis of feedback and of workshop attendance</i>. Wellington: Ministry of Education.</p> <p>Madden, F., & Madden, R. (2014a). <i>Reading Together® project: Strategies to motivate participation of parents/whānau in Reading Together® workshops</i>. Wellington: Ministry of Education.</p> <p>Madden, F., & Madden, R. (2014b). <i>Report on feedback from the Reading Together® workshops run by the Reading Together® project schools in 2013</i>. Wellington: Ministry of Education.</p> <p>Madden, F., & Madden, R. (2015a). <i>Reading Together® project 2014 - Analysis of feedback on changes in student achievement and engagement</i>. Wellington: Ministry of Education.</p> <p>Madden, F., & Madden, R. (2015b). <i>Report on feedback from the Reading Together® workshops run by Reading Together® project schools in 2014</i>. Wellington: Ministry of Education.</p> <p>Madden, F., & Madden, R. (2015c). <i>Reading Together® project schools in 2014</i>. Wellington: Ministry of Education.</p> <p>Woodley, A. (2018). <i>Storytime Foundation Evaluation</i>. Auckland: Point Research Limited.</p> <p>Woodley, A. (2021). <i>Storytime Foundation Evaluation: Taonga mō ngā Tamariki</i>. Auckland: Point & Associates.</p>
<p>Unpublished research or evaluation reports about Reading Together®</p>	<p>Wehipeihana, N., & Oakden, J. (2009). <i>Evaluation of the Rotorua trial of the Reading Together® programme: A focus on whānau engagement</i>. Unpublished report. Wellington: Research Evaluation Consultancy Limited.</p> <p>Sullivan, C., Wehipeihana, N. & Oakden, J. (2009). <i>Design & measurement issues: Discussion paper for Reading Together® (phase 2)</i>. Unpublished discussion paper. Wellington: Research Evaluation Consultancy Limited.</p> <p>Evaluation Associates. (2010). <i>Reading Together® analysis of student achievement data at two schools</i>. Unpublished draft report. Wellington: Ministry of Education.</p> <p>Oakden, J., & Wehipeihana, N. (2010). <i>Implications for scaling up the Reading Together® programme: Discussion paper</i>. Unpublished report. Wellington: Judy Oakden Consultancy.</p> <p>McNaughton, S., Trinick, R., Jeurissen, M., & Kercher, S. (2010). <i>The evaluation of the Reading Together® component of the Manurewa Literacy Project. Milestone 2, Phase 1</i>. Auckland: Woolf Fisher Research Centre, University of Auckland.</p> <p>McNaughton, S., Jeurissen, M., Trinick, R., & Allpress, J. (2012). <i>The evaluation of the Reading Together® component of the Manurewa Literacy Project. Milestone 4: Final report</i>. Auckland: Woolf Fisher Research Centre, University of Auckland.</p> <p>Oakden, J. (2021). <i>Evaluation of Reading Together® Te Pānui Ngātahi 2020: Capturing parent voices</i>. Unpublished report. Wellington: Ministry of Education.</p>

Administrative data or internal reports or analysis	<p>Good, J. (2014a). <i>Analysis of student gains in reading levels and engagement in learning</i>. Internal document. Auckland: Ministry of Education.</p> <p>Good, J. (2014b). <i>The Reading Together® Programme has ripple effects in the community</i>. Unpublished document. Auckland: Ministry of Education.</p> <p>Good, J. (2015). <i>Reading Together® briefing meeting presentation</i>. Internal document. Auckland: Ministry of Education.</p> <p>Good, J. (2017). <i>Analysis of National Standards Reading source data through Education Counts</i>. Wellington: Unpublished analysis. Ministry of Education.</p> <p>Ministry of Education (2020). <i>Unpublished analysis of Programme for International Literacy Study data on New Zealand Year 5 students with 10 or fewer books at home by ethnicity in 2001 and 2015</i>. Wellington: Ministry of Education.</p>
Other literature that informs implementation and scaling up.	<p>Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (2021). <i>Our ideas</i>. Retrieved from Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching: https://www.carnegiefoundation.org/our-ideas/</p> <p>Coburn, C. (2003). Rethinking scale: Moving beyond numbers to deep and lasting change. <i>Educational Researcher</i>, 32(6), 3-12.</p> <p>Jagger, D. (2020). <i>He Whakaaro: School principals in New Zealand</i>. Retrieved from Education Counts: https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/he-whakaaro/he-whakaaro-school-principals-in-new-zealand</p> <p>Hubers, M. (2020). Paving the way for sustainable educational change: Reconceptualizing what it means to make educational changes that last. <i>Teacher and Teacher Education</i>, 93.</p> <p>Oakden, J., & Spee, K. (2020). <i>Pacific PowerUP FlexiPlus and Au Lotu programme evaluation 2019</i>. Wellington: Ministry of Education.</p> <p>Oakden, J., Walton, M., & Foote, J. (2021). Contracting public health and social services: insights from complexity theory for Aotearoa New Zealand. <i>Kōtuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online</i>, 16(1), 180-195.</p> <p>Wehipeihana, N. (2019). Increasing cultural competence in indigenous-led evaluation: A necessary step toward indigenous-led evaluation. <i>Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation</i>, 34(2), 369-384.</p> <p>Wehipeihana, N., Sebire, K., Spee, K., & Oakden, J. (2021). <i>More than just a jab: Evaluation of the Māori Influenza Vaccination Programme as part of the COVID-19 Māori health response</i>. Wellington: Ministry of Health.</p>
Other documents	<p>Blaikie, J. (2016, January 19). Reading Together® pulled apart? <i>Education Aotearoa</i>. Wellington. doi: https://ea.org.nz/reading-together-pulled-apart/</p>

Analysis, synthesis and reporting

The researchers first analysed separately the individual reports outlined in the previous section. Key comments were coded in Dedoose to develop a 'contextualist' thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). A contextualist approach: "acknowledge[s] the ways individuals make meaning of their experience, and, in turn, the ways the broader social context impinges on those meanings, while retaining focus on the material and other limits of 'reality'" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81).

The researchers then synthesised the different strands of data together. This synthesis helped surface a view of how to implement Reading Together® well according to the findings of the *School leadership and student outcomes: What works and why: BES* (Robinson et al., 2009) and *Teacher professional learning and development: Best evidence synthesis iteration* (Timperley et al., 2007).

Internal Ministry of Education personnel, with a deep involvement with Reading Together® over many years, worked in a participatory way with the researchers to provide the data needed for this report.

The report was peer reviewed by Nan Wehipeihana, Director, Weaving Insights, a member of the Kinnect Group. Nan has a deep understanding of the programme from previous involvement in research into its implementation in Rotorua in 2009–2010.

Appendix B: Key principles of teacher professional learning and development

Key principles of teacher professional learning and development Ngā tino mātāpono o te akoranga ngaio me te whanaketanga ngaio o ngā kaiako

- Focus on valued student outcomes:** Professional learning experiences that focus on the links between particular teaching activities and valued student outcomes are associated with positive impacts on those outcomes.
- Worthwhile content:** The knowledge and skills developed are those that have been established as effective in achieving valued student outcomes.
- Integration of knowledge and skills:** The integration of essential teacher knowledge and skills promotes deep teacher learning and effective changes in practice.
- Assessment for professional inquiry:** Information about what students need to know and do is used to identify what teachers need to know and do.
- Multiple opportunities to learn and apply information:** To make significant changes to their practice, teachers need multiple opportunities to learn new information and understand its implications for practice. Furthermore, they need to encounter these opportunities in environments that offer both trust and challenge.
- Approaches responsive to learning processes:** The promotion of professional learning requires different approaches depending on whether or not new ideas are consistent with the assumptions that currently underpin practice.
- Opportunities to process new learning with others:** Collegial interaction that is focused on student outcomes can help teachers integrate new learning into existing practice.
- Knowledgeable expertise:** Expertise external to the group of participating teachers is necessary to challenge existing assumptions and develop the kinds of new knowledge and skills associated with positive outcomes for students.
- Active leadership:** Designated educational leaders have a key role in developing expectations for improved student outcomes and organising and promoting engagement in professional learning opportunities.
- Maintaining momentum:** Sustained improvement in student outcomes requires that teachers have sound theoretical knowledge, evidence-informed inquiry skills, and supportive organisational conditions.
- Educationally powerful connections:** Enable teachers to activate educationally powerful connections to students' knowledge, experiences, identities, families, whānau, iwi and communities.

- Te arotahi ki ngā hua ākonga whai mana:** Hua mai ko te pai inā arotahia ai ngā whakaritenga whakapakari ako ki te whiri tahi i ētahi tikanga whakaako ki ngā hua whai mana mō te ākonga.
- Ngā take whai hua:** Ko te mātauranga me ngā pūkenga e whakatipuria ana ko ērā e whai mana ana hei whakatutuki i ngā hua ākonga whai mana.
- Te aho mātauranga, te whenu pūkenga:** Ko te raranga i te aho mātauranga, i te whenu pūkenga o te kaiako, tērā e mau ai te wānanga o te kaiako kia ita, tērā e hua ai te whakaako kia tina.
- Uia mai koia, whakamātauria atu:** Mā te mōhio ki ngā kōrero me ngā mahi hei whai mā te ākonga, e mōhio ai te kaiako he aha hoki ngā kōrero me ngā mahi hei whai mana.
- Rau te ako, rau te mahi:** Kia tini rawa ngā takanga mai o ngā kaupapa akoako mō ngā kaiako i ngā kōrero hou me te pānga hoki ki te mahi whakaako mēnā ka tino rerekē a rātou nā mahi whakaako. Me te aha anō, me whai ēnei āhuatanga i runga i ngā tikanga o te whirinaki, o te whakapātari.
- Ngā kaupapa manaaki i te tikanga ako:** Me rerekē ngā momo kaupapa hei tikanga ako i runga i te ritenga o ngā whakaaro hou ki ngā whakaaro e whānaki ana i ngā mahi whakaako o te wā, kāore rānei.
- Te ohu whai i ngā akoranga hou:** Mā te wānanga tahi ki te whakapakari i ngā hua mō ngā ākonga e āwhina ngā kaiako ki te raranga mai i ngā akoranga hou ki roto i ā rātou mahi whakaako.
- Ngā pū o te wānanga:** Me whai pūwānanga, atu i te hunga kaiako e whakaakona ana hei whakapātari i ngā whakaaro kua kōhatutia, hei whakatipu hoki ngā momo mātauranga hou, pūkenga hou anō e whai hua pai ai ngā ākonga.
- Tā te rangatira mahi:** Ko te mahi nui mā te tira arataki i ngā kaupapa mātauranga, ko te whakarui i ngā tūmanako kia whai hua ai ngā ākonga, ko te whakarite, ko te whakahaui hoki i ngā kaupapa whakapakari kaiako.
- Te tohe whakauka:** Me mātau rawa ngā kaiako ki ngā kaupapa whakaaro, me mōhio ki ngā tikanga pātai whai taunakitanga, me whai manaakitanga hoki hei tautoko i a rātou kia ukauka ai te whakapakari i ngā hua ākonga.
- Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini:** Hei whakatairanga i ngā putanga tino pai mō ngā ākonga kanorau katoa, me whakawhanake e ngā kaiako tō rātou kaha ki te whakaawe hononga mātauranga pakari ki te mātauranga, ngā wheako, ngā tuakiri, ngā whānau, ngā iwi, me ngā hapori o ngā ākonga.

Note: The first ten of these key principles of teacher professional learning and development are from the International Academy of Education's (IAE) BES Summary. Teacher professional learning and development / Te kaupapa whakaako, whakapakari kaitiaki. The full summary is available on IAE's website at www.ibe.unesco.org/en/services/online-materials/publications/publications-practices.html. Free hard copies are available from orders@theacademyofeducation.govt.nz. The eleventh principle is derived from the findings across the best evidence syntheses. See especially Chapter 7 of the School Leadership and Student Outcomes BES.



Appendix C: Photo credits

Source of photographs in this report

We thank:

- the parents involved for giving the Ministry permission for us to use their images in this report
- David Copeland for allowing us to take screenshots of the videos he made for the Ministry of Education and use them in this report.

All photos come from the video evidence collated as part of developing three *Best evidence in action implementation exemplars for Reading Together® Te Pānui Ngātahi: Implementation for impact and enduring, reciprocal high trust relationships between families, whānau and schools:*

These exemplars are:

- Reading Together® Te Pānui Ngātahi: Implementation for impact and enduring, reciprocal high trust relationships between families, whānau and schools. Manurewa Central School (Ministry of Education, 2018a)
- Reading Together® Te Pānui Ngātahi: St Joseph's School Otahuhu. Best evidence in action implementation exemplar (Ministry of Education, 2018b)
- Reading Together® Te Pānui Ngātahi at Ngāti Moko Marae: A School-Iwi Partnership implementation exemplar: Fairhaven School-Iwi Partnership (Ministry of Education, 2018b).

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