

Tui Tuia

Newsletter of Literacy Aotearoa

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Mahi Tahi - Partnership and Collaboration

Ngā mihi mahana kia koutou katoa... In this issue Beth Taylor, manager of Literacy Wairarapa shares the reason for learners' success in learning programmes that are encouraging young adults back into learning.

Also in this issue is a summary of the presentation given by 'story activist' Moya Sayer-Jones at the National Planning Hui. Evaluations from the hui showed that participants valued the calibre of the plenary speakers and especially enjoyed the diverse and wide range of workshop topics they could choose from.

(See [Tui Tuia, Issue 5](#) for summaries of other plenary speakers from the 2014 National Planning Hui)



Literacy Wairarapa – Partnership and Collaboration, Face-to-Face

Literacy Wairarapa is located in Masterton, the largest town in Wairarapa. So far this year, 190 learners and 15 tutors have been working together in a range of learning programmes.

Two foundation level programmes in particular are proving very popular and successful for students, with positive results demonstrated by excellent retention and completion rates. Te Poupou has been delivering Open Wānanga and Open Polytechnic learning programmes to young adults in their community who are keen to develop their skills for both personal and vocational reasons. Many of those enrolled in these programmes left school without qualifications or direction.

Promotion throughout the region

The popularity of the programmes is in part due to the relationships Literacy Wairarapa manager Beth Taylor has with the local community. She is actively involved in the Wairarapa network of social services such as REAP, the Masterton Community Centre, the Stars Trust (vocational and educational support), YMCA, UCOL (Universal College of Learning, Wairarapa Campus) Probation Services and various training organisations from around the area. At the beginning of the year, the programmes were publicised in the local paper, on the radio, on flyers and in other agencies' newsletters.

“We had referrals from social services, WINZ, individuals, and a lot of parents whose children who had left school 3-4 years ago. There are few courses available offering Level 1 and 2 quals, so we have filled that gap quite well. It has really enhanced our Poupou providing these programmes for people.”

Optimal Learning Environment

The main reason for the success of the programmes has been Poupou ability to identify early on the key factors required for an optimal learning environment for adult learners. Each of the programmes is designed to include some self-directed learning, i.e. the student works on course material in their own time. Beth says the success achieved by students is mainly due to the face-to-face contact that they have with tutors.

Beth says, “We have found that the best way to facilitate learning is to provide drop-in workshops. We run them twice a week, on Tuesdays from 9-12 for Open Wānanga students and on Wednesdays 9-12 for the Open Poly students. That has been the secret. In talking to other Poupou managers we have found that many of the adult learners we see aren't particularly successful at self-directed learning.”





Open Polytechnic programmes

The Open Polytechnic programmes include *Get Ahead Start*, *Get Ahead Skills*, and *Get Ahead Choices*. This year there have been 35 students working on any one of the three programmes. Beth is in regular contact with the Open Polytechnic Programme and Student Advisor, Bon Uriaro, who provides advice in choosing the best courses for the students. "A lot started with 'Get Ahead Start'. Some have enough credits to do 'Choices' or 'Skills'. Bon checks their eligibility and makes recommendations. He gets straight back to me," says Beth

Students have progressed from one programme to the next, building their skills and confidence to look toward employment opportunities and enrolment in further learning with the local Tertiary institute, UCOL (Universal College of Learning, Wairarapa Campus).

Beth says, "Lots of people are coming in wanting to do the Open Poly courses. They are really good programmes to introduce and prepare students for tertiary study. We see a number of young people who get to their 20s and are now keen to gain quals. We had three girls in yesterday asking about the Open Poly programmes. It is a perfect course for them. It's really empowering for those who really have no study skills. Two learners have just completed 'Choices' and have now been accepted on courses at UCOL to do Health Science."

Open Wānanga (OW) programmes

The Open Wānanga programmes include *Papa Ako: Learning to Learn*; *Papa Whairawa: Financial literacy*; and *Mahi Toa: National Certificate of Employment Skills*. Literacy Wairarapa has 19 students enrolled in Open Wānanga programmes to date.

Papa Ako: A learning to learn programme for students who are considering tertiary study for the first time or those who have not studied in a while.

Papa Whairawa: A financial literacy programme for people wanting to have financial knowledge and skills to make smart decisions about money.

Mahi Toa: is targeted to men and is designed to prepare them for employment, a promotion or a career change. It will give students the motivation, knowledge, skills and the right attitude to get a job and build their future. On successful completion of Mahi Toa students will receive the National Certificate in Employment Skills.



Left: Tutor Lynley Tuck and Open Polytechnic learner Raewyn. Right: Tutor Sharon Perry & Open Wānanga learner Catherine.

The drop-in workshops have two tutors available for questions, direction and support.

"Some learners stay the whole three hours while others come after doing some work at home and bring it in to get it assessed. The tutors are great. They make sure students set goals for the next week. It's important that they set goals. Students can go on the computer for that. They keep coming to the drop-in sessions, it's good for completions, and the reality is most of our learners have greater success in achieving their goals with this direction," says Beth.

Links:

<http://www.openwananga.ac.nz/index.php/our-programmes>

<http://www.openpolytechnic.ac.nz/subjects-and-courses/>



Literacy Wairarapa was represented at the Travelling Books Launch at Government House, Wellington 03/09/14. Shonnie was among four students who gave a speech.

L-R: Beth Taylor (Manager), Brett Tickner (Chairperson), Shonnie Tunnicliffe, Sophia Tunnicliffe.



Moya Sayer-Jones is a 'story activist'. She has a passion for storytelling, and has written novels, personal stories in newspapers, as well as writing for television and theatre. Moya recently spoke at the Literacy Aotearoa National Planning Hui and shared her experiences of being a story gatherer and a story teller.

Twelve years ago, Moya was approached by a not-for-profit group to write a book about poverty. She talked to people and recorded conversations and then knitted together stories that presented each person in the best light, to allow others to gain some understanding about how they came to be in their current circumstances. "I wanted to combat those stories, what it is to be poor, what it is to have a drug addiction, or to have left your children; ...the complex reasons why people's lives turned out like that," said Moya.

One woman who told her story had struggled for years to protect her daughter, who died following a heroin overdose. Moya witnessed the power of story when she returned with the draft written account. The woman read the story and she said, "I see now, I did try. I see now I did all I could."

This moment led to Moya leaving fiction story writing behind her and telling the real life, powerful stories that people have to offer. Why would they tell their stories? Many people are sick of telling their story to agencies, case workers and others that are designated to support and assist them, but telling their story to a 'story listener' is different because the story tellers believe it will make a difference.

Moya shared some research findings from Bruce Feiler, author of 'The secrets of happy families'*. He looks at what makes families happy, and what makes kids resilient, that some can withstand challenges and tragedies while others fall apart.

Sara Bookman Duke is a psychologist working with children with learning disabilities in the US. She noticed that the kids she worked with who were better at facing challenges seemed to have a much better knowledge of their own family.

Her husband, Dr Marshall Duke and his colleague Dr Robyn Fivush of Emory University (Atlanta, Georgia) decided to investigate this further and made up a test called the 'Do you know? Scale'**, where children answered 20 questions that they could not have learnt themselves; that they would have to have to have heard from family stories or information passed on in some way. They asked a group of children to answer the questions, e.g.

- Do you know where your parents met?
- Do you know the source of your name?
- Do you know where your mother grew up?
- Do you know some of the jobs your dad had when young?
- Do you know who you mum's favourite relative was?

They found that the kids who had a sense of their stories were happier, more resilient, better equipped in their capacity to withstand difficulties exhibited much lower levels of anxiety, achieved better outcomes if they faced economic or educational disadvantage, and had a strong sense of self.

Two months later, the '9/11' terror attacks occurred and researchers Duke and Fivush saw an opportunity to go back to assess the same children... 'though the families they studied had not been directly affected by the events, all the children had experienced the same national trauma at the same time.' The children from families who were strong storytellers, 'proved to be more resilient, meaning they could moderate the effects of stress.'*

The shape of the family doesn't matter. It's the way people get the information. What matters is that as a family that you create opportunities to sit around and share stories.

There are three types of stories we tell our kids:

Ascending – the stories of our achievements

Descending – what was tough, lost a job, mum got sick...

The ones that make our children strong are the **oscillating** stories, we've had good times, we've had bad times, but look, we're still standing.

...continued next page



Moya Sayer-Jones, Story Activist cont.

That's where children learn how to be strong. It doesn't matter if things are difficult because they have heard stories of rising above it. Drs Duke and Fivush refer to this as the development of the *intergenerational self*. (To find out more about this, go to the links below.)

Moya encouraged all hui participants to take time to reflect on our stories, personally and organisationally. Reflect on where you are going, telling these stories to each other, and to the people that matter to us, and those we want to draw nearer.

Story Web Links

Moya Sayer-Jones:

<http://www.onlyhuman.com.au/>

<https://www.youtube.com/user/storydoctor>



*The Stories that bind us, by Bruce Feiler, New York Times 15/03/13

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/17/fashion/the-family-stories-that-bind-us-this-life.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&

Note: *The comments that follow the article also offer food for thought for families with a resoundingly negative narrative who have experienced enormous hardship, physical and mental abuse and little in the way of an ascending story.*

**The 20 questions:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marshall-p-duke/the-stories-that-bind-us- b_2918975.html

2014 Calendar of Events

Mahuru (September)

Travelling Books Launch,
Government House, Wellington
3/09/14

International Literacy Day,
8/09/14 (Monday)

Adult Learners' Week - He Tangata Mātauranga,
8-14/09/14 [more...](#)

Whiringa ā nuku (October)

Money Week, Commission for Financial Literacy and Retirement Income
13-19/10/14 [more...](#)



A Numeracy Resource from VALBEC

Webinar - 'Building Strength with Numeracy'

ACAL and QCAL had a webinar on using the [free VALBEC numeracy resources](#). Over 100 people joined in while the author, Beth Marr, took us through some strategic thinking as well as presentation tips.

This event is now concluded but you can still [watch it on YouTube](#).

[Download the free resources](#)



Literacy Aotearoa
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Literacy Aotearoa Incorporated

Delivering Quality Literacy for Over 30 Years

Back Suite, 449 Richmond Road, Grey Lynn Private Bag 78800, Grey Lynn, Tamaki Makaurau/Auckland

Phone: 09 378 2080 Fax: 09 378 2083 Email: admin@literacy.org.nz www.literacy.org.nz