

# Summer reading to overcome the summer effect: a partnership between a school, a library and the school community

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**Project dates:** February 2014 to December 15, 2015

## Introduction

The project investigated a 'context based solution' (McNaughton et al. 2012) designed to reduce the summer effect in reading. Developed collaboratively by a school and a local library to raise achievement in reading, it incorporated views of teachers, librarians, students, whanau and the broader Papatoetoe community into a programme to promote the enjoyment in students' reading and raise achievement. The programme drew on the literacy and literature based knowledge and experience of teachers and librarians, as well as the cultural knowledge and values of whanau to develop a school/whanau/community programme with a summer reading component.

The programme aimed to: increase students' love of literature, engagement in reading and to raise student achievement in reading increase whanau and library involvement with classroom programmes so that students were optimally prepared for a summer programme; to enhance teachers' knowledge of literature and of using literature as a vital component of literacy learning; to build on students' and teachers' anticipated enhanced knowledge of literature, and on students' motivation to read in 2015, their last year of primary school.

We believed that, in taking an innovative approach, we could develop a "context based solution" (McNaughton et al 2012) to reduce disparities in literacy achievement.

## What we did

We worked with the local public library team, our students, their parents and caregivers to construct a Summer Reading Programme (SRP). Students were prepared for and supported throughout the SRP by the research support teacher and the teaching team. They used a variety of strategies to engage the students including the team read-aloud and ongoing collaborative team brainstorms to plan learning experiences within the spiral of inquiry approach. The four-week SRP in January 2015 at the Papatoetoe library, included daily planned activities as well as time for personal reading. Following the SRP we measured students' reading achievement and their attitudes to reading.

## Key Findings

1. A smaller summer slide occurred for the high attendees of the summer component than for the same students in previous years.
2. More interestingly, the data revealed some notable improvements for the whole cohort in relation to sentence and paragraph comprehension. There was no loss or summer slide in either of these categories.
3. In relation to student attitudes, there were increases in student motivation and enthusiasm toward reading, as well as greater engagement with extended texts. Most

significant, was a marked alteration in students' confidence in, and view of themselves as readers. Many children felt they had become better readers as a result of the project.

4. Outcomes have also led to ongoing spiral inquiry and team-based professional learning for all teachers in the teaching team. These outcomes have been shared with our school's Reading Development Team and incorporated into our school's reading curriculum.

## Implications for Practice

1. We developed greater understanding of the importance of student voice and learner agency in designing the SRP. We acknowledged the importance of incorporating students' ideas and co-constructing programmes with them. We have continued to do this as we develop further, learner agency in our school.
2. We learned about the importance of the continuity of personnel in a project of this nature and we learned the value of the special connections that can be established in a community project.
3. We strengthened the spiral of inquiry approach in which teachers were prepared to reflect, evaluate, adjust and adapt their practice accordingly, throughout the preparation phase of the SRP and during the SRP throughout the summer break.
4. The project has convinced us that a summer slide in reading achievement can be minimised, and even prevented. It has confirmed that developing a community of readers, in which reading is a base of social interaction, such as the cohort-wide read-aloud in particular, fosters student engagement and discussion about books which can impact positively on student achievement.

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