

**Report on Feedback  
from the  
Reading Together Workshops  
run by the  
Reading Together Project schools  
in 2013**

**Analysis and Report prepared by  
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## 1 Introduction

In 2013, through the Reading Together Project, the Reading Together<sup>R</sup> Programme was extended to involve a total of 594 schools. 77% of these schools were in deciles 1 to 3, while 19% were in deciles 4 and 5, and the remaining 4% were decile 6 or above. This report examines feedback from 106 of these schools.

The Reading Together Project aims to lift the reading level of the long “tail” of children who are underachieving as readers, many of whom are Māori and Pasifika from underprivileged communities. As in 2012, the proportion of Māori and Pasifika students at the schools taking part in the Reading Together Project was significantly higher than that of Year 1 to 8 students nationally. Correspondingly, the proportion of Māori and Pasifika families participating in the Reading Together workshops was greater than the proportion of those learners nationally.

Ethnicity	Years 1 to 8 National roll (2012) <sup>1</sup>	Reading Together schools total roll (2012)	Workshop participants (2013)
% NZ Māori	24.1	40.2	33.6
% Pasifika	10.2	15.5	12.9
% All other	65.7	44.3	53.5

While some statistical analysis is included, the focus of this report is a qualitative analysis of the participants’ comments made in the feedback recorded by the facilitators of the workshops. Therefore, extensive use of quotes has been made throughout the report. These provide an illuminating insight into the far-reaching impact of the programme.

Many of the participants had negative memories of their own school days or struggled with reading themselves but were motivated to help their children achieve.

*I feel more confident to help my son. It has been hard but I tried hard!*

*I hate reading – really hate it! But I will try if you think it will help my kids.*

*I can do this – reading is not bad – and if my kid can be better than me at school then I am up for it.*

*Great that you can just talk about a text – I can’t read so now I can do books with my kid.*

The facilitators of the workshops used innovative methods to provide a welcoming environment. Barriers to attendance were reduced by the provision of childcare, food and transport and by scheduling workshop times that would best suit the participants. These efforts were appreciated. Some participants approached the workshops with trepidation but were pleasantly surprised at the non-threatening, inclusive nature of the workshops, and were relieved to find that other families had similar concerns.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.educationcounts.govt.nz](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz)

*I honestly thought this group was going to be another form of being told you don't know enough and don't teach enough you have to be better, But its not, its about learning to communicate in a child's world with support and advice from other parents. Its nice to know I'm not alone in some things that I struggle with as a parent.*

As a consequence community ties were forged both between families and with the school.

*Being new to the school, this programme has helped me meet other parents and families in the community. It has helped build relationships.*

*Did the workshop and then had the opportunity to go into class to help...offered with reading because of the things I had learnt from Reading Together...and I felt like I knew what I was on about!*

*Thank you so much I had bad experiences at school. Now I feel welcome and supported. I have joined the Home/School Association.*

The strategies of making a regular time for reading that is suitable for both the child and adult, talking about a book and using picture cues, allowing wait time for the learner to decipher a word and encouraging the learner to read a variety of library books and other print media, while simple to implement, were revelatory for many participants. One particularly tolerant mother commented:

*I have learnt to talk about the pictures and find the right time to do the reading. Not when she is tired. To take a chill pill and not worry about every word being right. She is so keen on her homework she wrote her spelling words in vivid on the car and the lounge wall!*

As well as discovering learning strategies, the workshop participants became aware of the importance of providing emotional support for the learner. As the caregivers learnt to be more patient and to provide positive reinforcement the atmosphere around reading times became less stressful. Reading shifted from being a chore to become a family time of shared enjoyment.

*Picked up skills for helping children with difficult words. Reading is no longer a task, but something to enjoy. Kapa! to mahi me haere tonu!*

*I have learned to be patient with my child and to make reading fun. The programme has given me and my kids bonding time and a lot of laughs. The older ones want to join in. I would encourage other parents to do this (workshop).*

After the workshops, caregivers' expectations of the learner were more realistic. As one participant commented,

*Went from thinking that my child was a hopeless reader who really struggled to realising that he is a great little learner. This workshop really gave LOTS of insights into what the process of learning is and gave lots of practical suggestions and ideas to helping them read.*

Both caregivers and the schools noticed increased engagement with reading, manifested in increased enjoyment and frequency of reading and in a gain in achievement.

*I learned to encourage her when she is reading and to build her confidence. After I started doing this, she tried harder and now reading is a happier experience for us.*

*My daughter has been so much more interested in reading and happy to talk about her books. It is fantastic to see how excited she is about it. I have noticed that my children are keen and more on task with their home reading and actually picking up any book. I am more happy to read to my children as its about sharing the love of reading not who has to read. I have changed in the sense of how much pressure I put on my child. I now make it fun.*

As a school remarked:

*One child who was below standard has progressed to 'at' standard and that is mainly due to the parent making a concerted effort to support the child's reading at home. On that basis alone, the programme has been worthwhile.*

While the majority (82%) of the workshop participants were women, many made a point of passing the skills on to the rest of the whānau, in particular their male partner.

*We now have set times for reading and sharing our stories. I have told my partner that it is very important for his son to see him reading at home. My son gets so happy when he can say out a new word, and we try to use that word with him when we talk.*

*This course has helped so much, it has made reading at home so much better, I love spending time with my children. This course has also helped me explain things to 'daddy', which has helped him read with the children.*

The benefits of the programme slowly spread through a community:

*I know how to encourage T. When the story is long I feel free to share the reading. Now I notice he is reading with more expression. I am recommending the programme to others because it has been so enjoyable. School note: This person is a Grandma who has custody of her grandsons. She is passing what she has learned onto the other siblings in this family not in her care, her children who are also parents and her grandchildren in other homes. The pebbles in the pond travel far.*

As these remarks demonstrate, the 2013 Reading Together Project, through supporting schools to implement the Reading Together<sup>R</sup> Programme, continues to make a real difference in attitudes toward reading and consequently in reading achievement. It is instrumental in helping to break the negative cycle of disengagement with reading that exists in many whānau.

## 2 Methodology

The Reading Together<sup>R</sup> Programme consists of a set of four workshops. Up to fifteen parents participated in each set of workshops. The method of selecting participants varied from school to school. Some attended in response to advertisements in local newspapers, others from notification about the workshops in the school newsletter, while others were “shoulder tapped” by the school.

The schools provided information about the gender, ethnicity, relationship with the child, other siblings at the school, and attendance of each of the workshop participants. In addition the workshop facilitators were invited to provide feedback by reporting comments made by the participants about the Reading Together<sup>R</sup> Programme. This report categorises the reported comments in order to analyse those areas which the participants found of specific benefit.

The reporting format varied from school to school. Some reported verbal comments, others selected written comments, while others had used a questionnaire format. A number of schools did not report back any participant comments. Because of this variation in reporting format, responses were categorized to reflect recurring themes. To allow comparability, this analysis in most cases uses the same categories as used in the 2012 Reading Together report.

The four categories with their 2013 frequency are:

- Strategies that the workshop participant found most useful (29%)
- Improvements in empathy and emotional support for the learner (33%)
- Positive outcomes for the learner (22%)
- Positive outcomes for the family/whānau/community (16%)

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

*Not being too pushy with his reading. Being very patient and letting him fix words instead of rushing. Overall it's fun for me and him.*

was recorded as a response in the following two subcategories of the section *Strategies that the workshop participant found most useful*

- Increased patience
- Wait time, slow down, don't rush

As well as the sub-category:

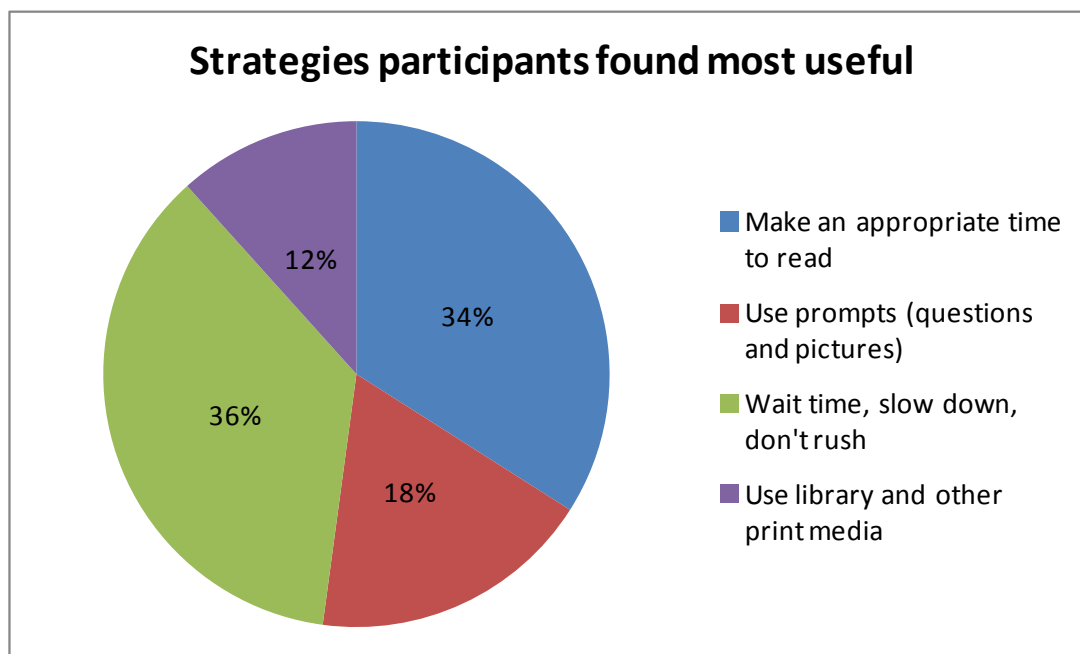
- More confident, enjoying reading more

in the section *Positive outcomes for the learner*.

### 3 Analysis

#### A Strategies that the workshop participant found most useful

29% of the responses recorded strategies that the participant had found particularly useful (21% in 2012). These fell into four broad subcategories as shown on the chart below.



##### i) Finding an appropriate and regular time to read

In the words of one of the participants, the thing that she found hardest was

*Taking time out of our busy lives and spending time with our kids and making language fun.*

It was recognized that the time chosen need to be suitable for the child as well as the parent.

*I am now allowing my child to have some time after school to relax, rather than off the bus, uniform off and reading, which was a struggle.*

The need to focus on the child without other distractions was taken on board.

*It was difficult to find time to read to the children after school but after joining the Reading Together workshops I tried cutting down TV time and found a quiet area to read with the children.*

*We now take the time to sit and read and listen, rather than peeling the potatoes or talking on the phone.*

*I now spend more time listening to the children reading than watching TV as a family. We now have set times for reading and sharing our stories. I have told my partner that it is very important for his son to see him reading at home. My son gets so happy when he can say out a new word, and we try to use that word with him when we talk.*

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

Many caregivers had felt that it was “cheating” to let the new reader look at the pictures in a book. They learnt that the pictures and other prompts are instead an important aid to learning.

*Put an experience with a book so it means something to him. Talk about the pictures. Let him make up the story. Stepdad has got some truck books for him from work. He loves the pictures and makes him feel like he is reading.*

*We laugh our way through stories and talk about the pictures now. I used to cover them up.*

*Wow have I changed at the beginning I would have jumped straight in and would have wanted every word right. Now I know to look at the pictures and talk about it.*

*This program taught me how to read better with my son. I thought that it was really important to cover the pictures before and now I realise how much these help an early reader to tell the story. Thank you .*

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

The need to give the learner time to work out words was recognized as an important strategy.

*I now make sure I give the time to work out the word, rather than giving the answer.*

*To be more patient while reading with the boys and give them more time to work out the words instead of jumping in.*

*Just take your time, don't rush. Support your child. Understand that reading is a really complex thing that will take as long as it does. Each child is different.*

**iv) Using the library and other media**

Caregivers became aware of other forms of print media besides books so that reading became part of everyday life.

*To realise there are many things to do to enjoy reading from not just books. –ipad, signs. Letters. lists etc.*

*I have been cooking with my son and he has had to read the recipe. It is so good to know that we can read so many different types of writing. We laughed so much!*



School librarians and public librarians are an important part of the Reading Together<sup>R</sup> Programme. Children and caregivers alike were excited by the new possibilities opened up by the libraries.

*Thank you for helping me join the library I am so excited that my son and I are members.*

*We have joined the local library. My child loves our visits. He brings exciting books home from school too. He spends less time at the tv because we read together.*

*As a dad, I am very proud to support my son with his home reading. We live on a farm and we are not close to a library. He brings home interesting books from the school library. The principal says we can visit the school library any time we like.*

*We are new to Christchurch so visiting the library gave us a chance to enrol our children and also we learnt a lot about the different parts within the library.*

*I'm so excited to have a library card and to know how to use the library. There was so much in the library. S loved the dress ups.*

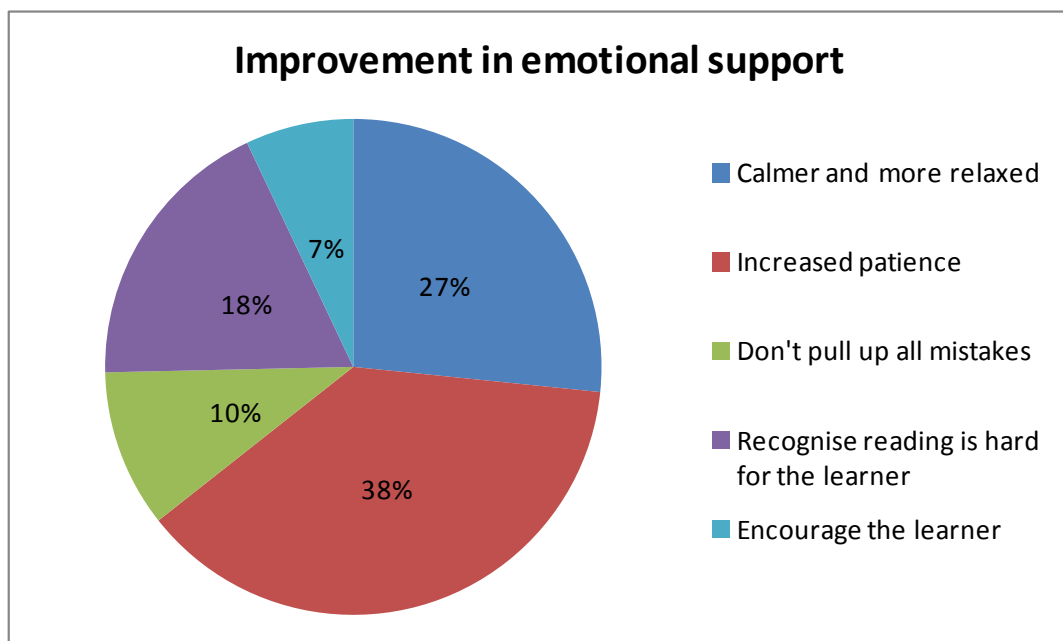
## B Improvements in empathy and emotional support for the learner

The workshops gave participants an insight into the child's perspective of the learning process. This increased understanding resulted in not only increased engagement with reading for the learner but also made reading a source of shared enjoyment rather than of frustration for caregiver and learner.

*I learnt to see reading through my children's eyes, and the need to make it an enjoyable time. Moving from "task to treat". A good chance to reassess and refocus on reading times.*

33% of the responses mentioned an improvement in the participant's empathy and emotional support for the learner (27% in 2012).

The responses could be grouped into the five subcategories as shown on the graph below.



### i) Calmer and more relaxed atmosphere

A recurring theme in the responses was that by taking a calmer, more relaxed approach reading had gone from a source of stress to a source of enjoyment.

*It has shown me how to do reading at home with my children, that I can relax and not put too much pressure on my child.*

*Did not think how hard it is with a screaming mother and stressed child, once I started seeing it from her side I slowly got it.*

*I've learnt how to read with my kids without getting stressed out. We've learnt to have fun and I feel good about helping them. I love the different ways of reading (and) my children glow everytime they learn different words.*

**ii) Increased patience**

One of the most difficult things for many caregivers was overcoming their own impatience with the learner.

*I learnt how to be patient – it was hard.*

However, learning to be patient was the strategy most frequently cited by participants as the most important *thing learnt in the workshops*.

*I learnt to be more patient while listening to my kids read, and to make time and not to rush. It is more fun now. It has encouraged us to want to read more.*

*My child now wants to read, I am now more patient with him, I give him more praise and it does not end up in an argument.*

*Helped us (parents) with patience. Helped extended family (nana) also.*

*She is more interested in reading books. I have to be patient and go at her pace. I have learnt to be patient and it is ok to be wrong. All my children are wanting to read to me and my husband.*

*I have noticed by me being more patient and waiting for her to sound out words, she is a lot more relaxed and enjoying and understanding the story.*

**iii) Don't pull up every mistake**

Caregivers noted that they learned the importance of reading for fluency and understanding rather than worrying about the learner making minor errors.

*I have learnt how hard learning to read actually is. I've learnt that word perfect isn't as important as comprehension. I've learnt that making reading fun is paramount.*

*Being patient, waiting for finishing the sentence before interrupting if read incorrect. Using the pictures to help with words more. Not to worry about correcting if names aren't exact.*

*Not rushing your child when reading together. Not correcting them until the end and asking them to re-read to see if it makes sense. Get your child to look through book first so they have an idea what the story is about.*

*To try when a word is hard. I know when to intervene and know when to allow reading to flow for R to fix a not so correct word ... as perhaps didn't make sense.*

*I loved it, the info I learned was really eye opening. We are more confident in our reading and don't stress as much over the little glitches.*

**iv) Recognised that reading is difficult for the child**

The workshops enabled the caregiver to empathise with how hard it is for a child to learn to read.

*This course has really opened my eyes to how hard reading is for a child. Highly recommend. I have always taught the way I was taught by drill sergeant, word perfect etc – I have learnt a better way.*

*Stay calm! Make the reading time more enjoyable. Take over if 5 mistakes are made as book is too hard.*

*I have learnt to be more patient and it's opened my eyes a lot to the approach I used to take before this programme. I now take my time with reading with my daughters and enjoy it. I often remind myself "what if I was in their shoes?"*

*This has helped me to understand what my kids face when they don't know the words. This really sunk in with the 'BROCK' booklet. I did not know how to sound out what was in front of me.*

*Go easy on them! Remember what it is like for the first time reader – hieroglyphics! Like the device to look through book first, read the story through pictures cues etc.*

**v) Pride in the learner and shared enjoyment**

Caregivers came to realize the value of giving the learner positive reinforcement and making reading fun.

*I use positive (words) ways to talk to them now and it's a big thing for them.*

*My kids want to read! R has shown enjoyment at reading time and the praises vocally given. B also wanted to read willingly. The programme for me and my son has been a success. Ka mau te wehi and Thank you*

*Read with passion and excitement, gets them listening and learning. It showed my children that even I can read a good story too! But even Mum has difficulty reading some words too! We have learnt to listen as a group quietly while one child reads her story.*

*I was so proud when my daughter read to x (the teacher leading Reading Together) in the first session. I couldn't believe how she read the book by herself.*

## C Positive outcomes for the learner

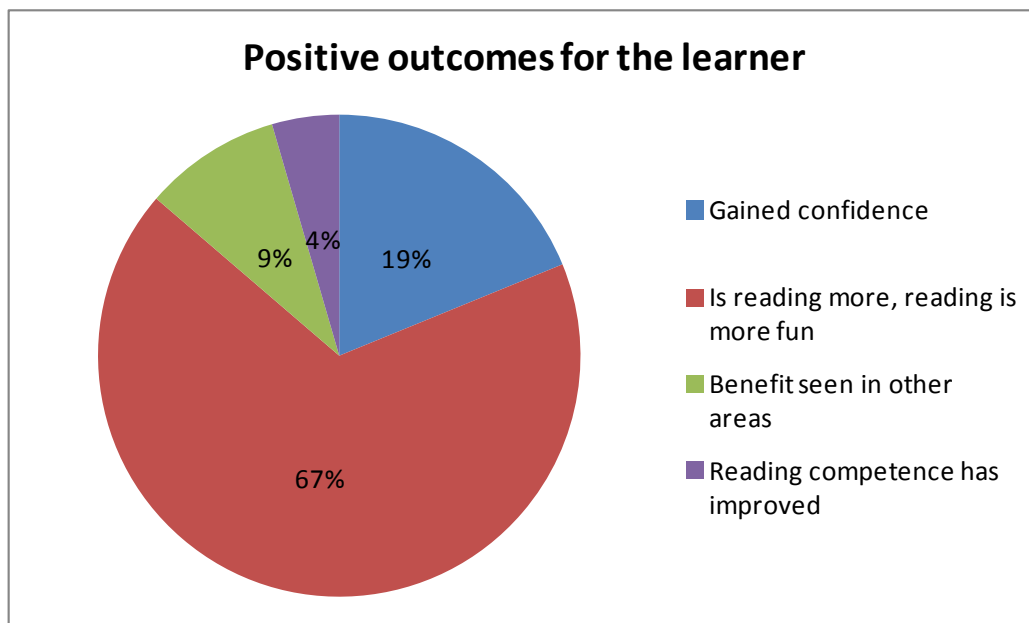
The strategies learned and new confidence of the workshop participants resulted in an often dramatic increase in the learner's engagement with reading.

*It has made me confident to encourage my child with their reading, and now he is reading books by himself.*

22% of the caregiver responses remarked on specific positive outcomes for the learner (26% in 2012). The chart below indicates the broad subcategories these responses fell into. As shown, the learners became more confident and relaxed and, as a result, they began reading more. Reading came to be regarded as a pleasurable activity for both caregiver and child.

*My child enjoys reading and before we used to fight about reading and I used to lose my patience with what I thought they should know. Now I know its about reinforcing the reading for enjoyment and that the books should be easy so that they find success at home. Celebrate it together.*

The caregiver perceptions of improvement in student engagement with reading show a correlation with the school perceptions, discussed in the section of this report *Classroom measures of shifts in student engagement*.



### i) The learner is more confident

The child's gain in confidence over the time of the workshops was apparent to the caregivers.

*It made reading more enjoyable for my child and myself. He was more confident.*

*I feel confident about encouraging my child to read books that are trickier for him because now I know how to support him and he feels so good about reading harder books.*

*Has helped a lot in supporting my children's reading. They are getting more faster, interested in the books and also spending quality time with us.*

*The children are more willing to sit down and read. More confident and tries more to work out words instead of asking for help.*

*I would recommend this programme to other parents – I found the practical examples really helpful. We look forward to reading time at home now. My daughter talks about what she is reading now and has gained more confidence.*

*My children have become more confident in reading and want to read. They are more interested in the book and want to read more books. When it comes to reading, they are eager.*

**ii) The learner is reading more/reading is more fun**

The change in the learner's attitude to reading was the most remarked upon outcome of the programme.

*Reading is a lot more relaxed now and is not seen as a 'must' but more as a 'treat' by us all.*

*It changed a lot for my difficult child, now he is interested in the books*

*He loves reading more than before and he likes to talk about the story. He is loving school. He hardly talked before I helped him.*

*She feels my support now; reading at home is a pleasure, we have a better vibe and I don't have to nag or fight to get her to read*

*This programme has helped the whole family to now enjoy reading that we do a lot more reading together and at bed time every night. The children enjoy reading their homework book now.*

*Reading has become more enjoyable, my son wants to sit down and read to us. He is not frustrated and happy to tackle difficult parts.*

**iii) Benefitting other areas**

The improved attitude to reading flowed on to other areas of learning, particularly writing and spelling, and also into home life.

*I keep the book (the workshop manual) handy so I can look at it when I'm about to lose my cool. I also use the tips gained from this workshop on everyday tasks at home. – e.g. picking up toys.*

*Has always loved reading but now she is insisting on reading her bed time book to us. Her writing has improved as well. She loves school and plays schools at home. It is never hard to*

*get her to do all her homework. She likes a challenge. We can't believe the progress she has made. Everyone has noticed even her Grandparents.*

*I've learnt it's not hard to take time out for my children always say I'm busy – but my jobs now have gone on hold. Not just for reading – just family time as well.*

*We have started to understand the whole thing about reading and have started spending constructive time with our kids. It has helped with doing other homework too, like maths and writing.*

### **iii) Reading competence has improved**

The caregivers were enthusiastic about the improvement in their learners reading competence. These impressions were ratified by the classroom measures of student achievement discussed in a later section of this report.

*Boy I cannot believe what is happening to his writing. He wants to write all the time and read what he has written. He has learnt all his purple words in 2 and a half weeks and gone up a reading level. He is flying.*

*My child has improved his reading no end and is now nearly up to his peers.*

*My child shared with me that now he enjoys reading so much that it is now his best subject.*

*My child and I have more confidence in reading. I know how to teach my child in a positive way. My son is moving in reading levels and will try to read anything and everything*

## **D Positive outcomes for the family/whānau/community**

16% of the reported responses (25% in 2012) focused on how the benefit of the workshop had flowed through to better relationships within the whānau and in improved interaction with the school and wider community.

*Partner used to get really anti with “M”. (Not understanding the right word.) I gave him the book and told him off. It helped him to read it giving him some ideas. He has learnt to walk away and relax. It has helped with the older kids. God I wish I had done this course before cause it would have made so much difference with them. We have to break the cycle. It is helping with the whole family now in all their homework. We know what to do with the little one now.*

The facilitators of the workshops used innovative methods to provide a welcoming environment. Barriers to attendance were reduced by the provision of childcare, food and transport and by scheduling workshop times that would best suit the participants. These efforts were appreciated.

It was common for participants to express relief that other families had similar problems to them and to know that support was available.

*This group is a great support for parents who are or are not struggling with their children’s reading. I’ve learnt everyone’s experiences are so different and no way is the right way. We’re all going through the same thing.*

ESOL families were appreciative of the efforts some schools made to cater specifically for them.

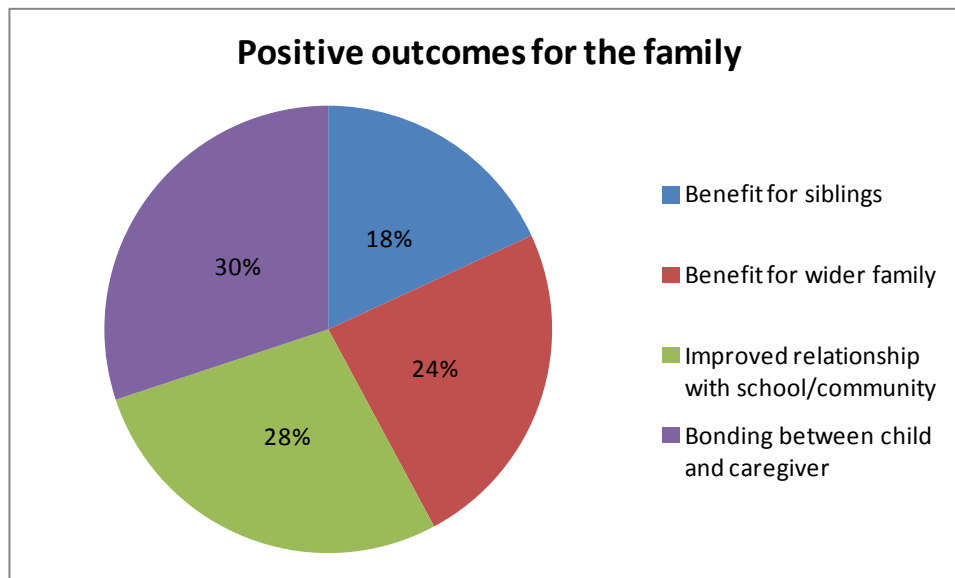
*We would love to have more classes because each time we came together we get something new to remember. Children also like to be with parents and teachers together in a study, learning environment. (GA is an Indian parent and ESOL)*

*English is a second language for our family it was good to be part of a workshop that was helping other ESOL families.*

*Jenny shared that it was OK to use our first language when introducing the book, this has helped my daughter to understand the story better.*



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



**i) Benefit for siblings**

89.6% of the workshop participants are noted as having more than one child at the school. In addition, many had preschool children. These other siblings benefitted along with the child whose reading progress had prompted attendance at the workshops.

*Because I am focusing on reading to my 'target' child, all my children are now being read to a lot more, and read to each other too.*

*Reading with (3 year old), she has learnt the flow of the way I recite the nursery rhymes and from there has memorised words and she knows exactly what she has memorised.*

*It has helped as we all started enjoying reading. Children with story books and comics while elders with the newspapers like the Advocate and Whangarei Report.*

*Has helped children to help each other and get along better. We have more conversations about reading and what child is doing at school.*

**ii) Benefit for other adult family/whānau members**

Over all the workshops, 82% of the participants were female. Most of these were mothers, although several grandmothers participated and were glad of the opportunity to catch up on the more relaxed approach to reading compared to when they or their children were at school.

*It is a great way for Grandma's to keep up to date with what my moos are doing because I only know what happened when I went to school and that was so different!*

The lack of male participation was noted by participants who recognized the value of the role their male partner could play in fostering reading.

*Would have liked partner (father) to have come and I would like to come again next year to support my partner.*

*My partner should come to this course.*

*It's better bring both parents (mandatory), especially the Father ... he needs to understand and co-operate with the mother to help the kids school learning.*

They made an effort to share what they had learned with their male partner and noted the resultant increased involvement on the part of the Dads.

*Dad is spending time looking through the books and helping the boys to choose them.*

*This programme made a quiet family time with Dad more common.*

*L does his homework with dad now. It is really great that Dad came to that one session as he finds reading really hard. He learnt that it does not matter if the adult cannot read and he can talk about the pictures and the stories. Dad didn't previously do much and after the meeting he is doing it most nights. They are learning to read together. (Mum)*

*This course has definitely helped myself and my husband to be able to read together with our children and that it is about more than the text.*

The new techniques were shared within the whānau:

*I'm sharing this programme with my cousin.*

*I can pass the Brock book onto my sister who has a 3 year old, for when she is learning to read.*

*All the different and new ideas that I have learned I have shared with their dad and other family members, especially finding the right time/place.*

### **iii) Relationship with the school and community**

The workshops helped alleviate feelings of isolation.

*I enjoyed hearing that other parents had concerns or problems similar to me.*

*Yes, this is a great program and I highly recommend it. This has shown me that I'm not alone in my struggles. Thank-you so much for your time to work Sue Arohanui. I have taken words from reading books to use as spelling words.*

*Thank you for running this programme – it is nice to know there are others that struggle to read.*

Barriers that existed between schools and participants were reduced.

*Thank you so much I had bad experiences at school. Now I feel welcome and supported. I have joined the Home/School Association.*

*It's the best thing I have done about reading. Through primary and high school I didn't really understand it much but now I know how important it is to read books to y kids. I like the sharing we do at the meetings. It is fun. Even my dad looks forward to the jokes and the riddles. It feels like we are supporting one another. School comment: This mum has now offered to help us with Kapa Haka and has already started teaching it to the older students in our school. This is an important start for us.*

*Did the workshop and then had the opportunity to go into class to help...offered with reading because of the things I had learnt from Reading Together...and I felt like I knew what I was on about!*

#### **iv) Closer bonding between child and caregiver**

The learners relished the undivided attention of the caregiver and resulted in the child and adult bonding over a mutually enjoyable activity.

*It brought us closer and one on one time was good too. I loved the strategies.*

*It has helped make our bond even stronger when we have reading time at home. (Dad)*

*My child knows it's alright to not get the word correct the first time. My child actually likes having reading time because she knows it's just her and me and she has my full attention.*

*(How have the workshops helped the family?) "Bonding! We always find time to read."*

*I have learned to be patient with my child and to make reading fun. The programme has given me and my kids bonding time and a lot of laughs. The older ones want to join in. I would encourage other parents to do this.*

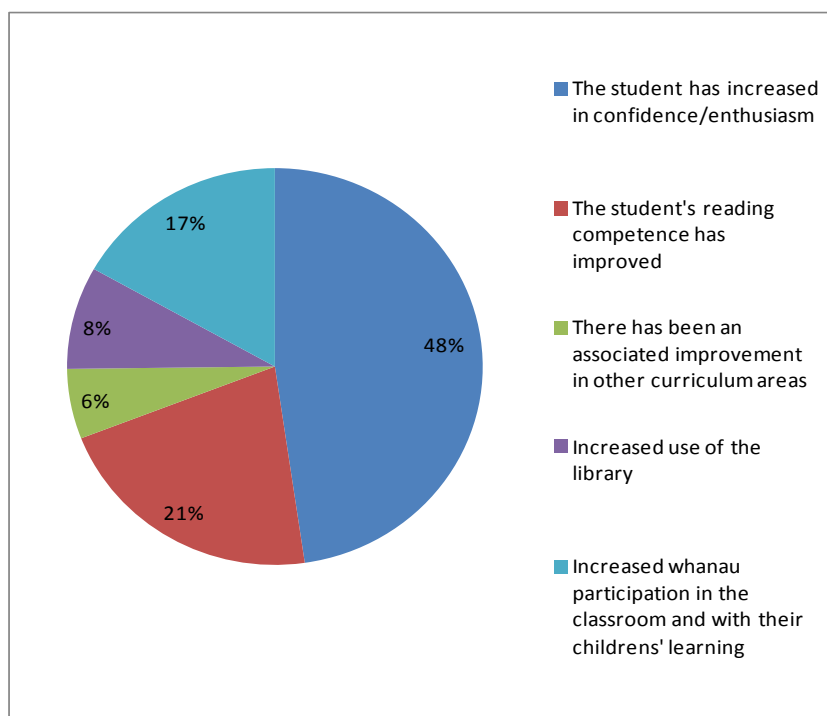
## E Classroom measures of shifts in student engagement

This feedback was sourced from comments made by facilitators and teachers on the *Observations/measures of student engagement before and after Reading Together workshops* template that many schools used to report on the workshops.

Five recurring themes were apparent in these responses. In order to give an indication of the relative occurrence of these themes, the number of times each was mentioned was noted and then expressed as a percentage of the total occurrences recorded. The dominant themes were that:

- A student whose caregiver participated in the workshops gained in confidence and/or enthusiasm for reading (48%)
- The student's reading competence improved (21%)
- There has been an associated improvement in other curriculum areas (6%)
- Library use increased(8%)
- There has been increased whānau participation in the classroom and with their children's learning (17%)

It is noteworthy that the workshop participants' perceptions of changes in student engagement in the earlier sections of this report closely mirror the school indicators.



**i) The student has increased in confidence/enthusiasm for reading**

Almost every school noted that students whose caregiver attended the Reading Together workshops was now a more confident and enthusiastic reader.

Some sample comments are

*W's confidence with her reading and high frequency words has really improved. She is constantly looking out for words, blends and letter sounds and is reading anything she can. I am really happy with the progress she has made with her reading. It is clear that there is an improvement in the home support she is receiving.*

*The students in my room whose parents were part of the Reading Together programme have had a noticeable change of attitude to reading in the classroom. They are more confident when working in a guided reading group. They want to share their ideas and opinions so much more than before and are now making steady progress.*

*It was noticeable that after a few weeks of his mum being on the Reading Together programme my student was more engaged with books and his attitude towards reading positively lifted. He would read independently and was fully engaged in guided reading lessons. He is now making progress in reading.*

*The student in my room who attended has been more confident in his reading and is not shy about reading to anyone, even me creeping over his shoulder. He is progressing well.*

*Less stress evident in some juniors during class reading time and fluency improving as a consequence.*

*O is a lot more confident during reading time. He is now participating in discussions on the current reading book, and thinking about what he is reading and even beginning to find this information in the text. O would need teacher assistance to choose library books, he is now able to independently choose and read by himself. He also now will stop at unknown words and give the beginning sound, once again he has more of an awareness of print.*

*M was a very reluctant reader. He now points to each word, looks at the sounds, gives an unknown word a try and reads with fluency and expression. He is more confident and competent. He now enjoys reading.*

Even those students who were already positive about reading showed an improvement in their engagement with reading.

*S already has a positive attitude to reading and since the programme he has begun to challenge himself to read harder books and give them a go. I have noticed that he is keen to participate in reading sessions and attempts the strategies he is learning. He is beginning to*

*read again when it doesn't make sense and his writing is making an improvement. I have not been able to test him yet but his confidence to use strategies has improved.*

## **ii) The student's reading achievement has improved**

The engagement with reading engendered by the child's increased confidence was reflected in an improvement in reading achievement.

*Reading Recovery teacher noticed a huge confidence boost - Increase in reading levels. Ex-reading recovery student showed a huge increase in engagement and reading levels.*

*All teachers have noted that the children whose family had been involved in Reading Together, had an increase in reading ability, but the biggest change has been in the children's attitude towards reading.*

The improvement in achievement was shown at all levels, from a student who was being considered for reading recovery prior to the workshops

*Classroom teacher reported in her term report that the Reading Together Programme, along with additional classroom reading had been an important catalyst in engaging one child in reading and as a result a big improvement had been achieved. At one point, the Reading Recovery Programme was considered for the child. However through the parent and teacher working together the improvement in the child's reading was so great that where she had been below the National Standard at six years of age, she will achieve the NS at seven years.*

to those who were already reading competently

*Has moved from Level 12 to level 16 over 7 weeks. (Teacher comment)*

Other sample comments are

*X is positive about reading and has jumped up about 4 levels. She is always keen to take books home to share with her mum.*

*T. has moved 7 reading levels and is so keen. Mum is so thrilled about her progress that she cried!*

*Child 'y' using more than one strategy to work out words. Looking for words in words, missing out and going back, re reading to self correct more frequently and confidently. Has moved 3 reading levels since the course commenced.*

*Teachers have noticed an increase in reading levels in the range of 1-6 reading levels for students whose parents participated*

*One child who was below standard has progressed to 'at' standard and that is mainly due to the parent making a concerted effort to support the child's reading at home. On that basis alone, the programme has been worthwhile.*

**iii) There has been an associated improvement in other curriculum areas**

While the focus of the comments was naturally on progress made with reading, a significant number remarked on improvement in other areas of learning as worthy of comment.

*2 parents have made the comment that their attitudes have changed markedly and now the children come to them and want to read rather than it being adult driven. The daughter's reading has shown no change, however in the latest data her writing has shown a good improvement.*

*There is a willingness to participate in whole class activities with increased confidence.*

*Marked enthusiasm for words and writing!*

*N Has become confident in all aspects of her work.*

*JR moved into a new class and is showing the way by reading every night and with expression. Written work has also improved (Reading – writing link).*

*I have notice huge changes to their attitudes with regards to their reading and progress. They are more enthusiastic and keen towards not just reading but also Maths.*

A co-ordinator commented:

*When talking to the teachers of those learners who attended this term's sessions, their responses in general was very favourable. A common answer was that the child is more confident with not only his/her reading but also toward their learning. Parents help at home had increased and parents were more enthusiastic about reading with their child. The flow-on effect has been a more positive attitude toward other learning areas.*

**iv) Use of the library has increased**

Fostering enjoyment of a range of books by encouraging use of the library was a very important aspect of the programme.

*The children love the boxes of books and the library books that have been provided. All the family are reading them*

*R wants to read books that he is interested in rather than what he has been given. He is taking library books that he has chosen with thought.*

*The teachers also reported that they had seen an improvement in the children's attitude to reading in general and they wanted to go to the library to get books to share at home.*

Both school and public librarians were very supportive and many schools organized to hold at least one session in the public library.

*We included an extra session where I took all parents and the child they were focusing on into the Timaru Public Library as only one parent had ever taken the children to the library. They made comments about being too scared to go to the library because they had too many children and they might break something. At the end of the programme there was only one family who hadn't visited the library after our visit.*

*Now he's got a library card he wants to go to the town library all the time, and we've registered him for the holiday reading programme. (We held session 3 in the public library, and signed up those parents and children who were not members).*

Parents were also encouraged to use the school library.

*More parents are using the school library and are regularly returning and issuing books.*

*The "mini libraries" were very successful and parents asked if it could continue after the workshops ended. We now have a visit to local library planned for whole school.*

**v) There has been increased whānau participation in the classroom and with their children's learning**

Many of the workshop participants had themselves had negative experiences at school or felt diffident about interacting with the school. Breaking down these barriers was a valuable aspect of the Reading Together<sup>R</sup> Programme.

*A teacher has commented that a parent from her class is more confident to come into the classroom and talk to her, and she has been telling her what she has been learning from the Reading Together workshops.*

*Parents commented on the fact that they understand the reading process, and feel more confident in helping their child learn how to read. Another parent commented on how excited she is that she has made new friends, and they are working together to support each other with their children's reading.*

*Parents are happier to talk about their child in an informal situation.*

*Some parents from course have approached class teachers to talk about reading – which was new for these families.*



*The parents who attended the workshop have formed positive partnerships with the school ... one parent asked for a maths programme like this one to run in the school next year.*

*Better communication between parents and staff re reading. Parents now know from their experiences in the workshops why we do things the way we do with reading (e.g lower level readers for home reading, why we need to listen to our children read).*

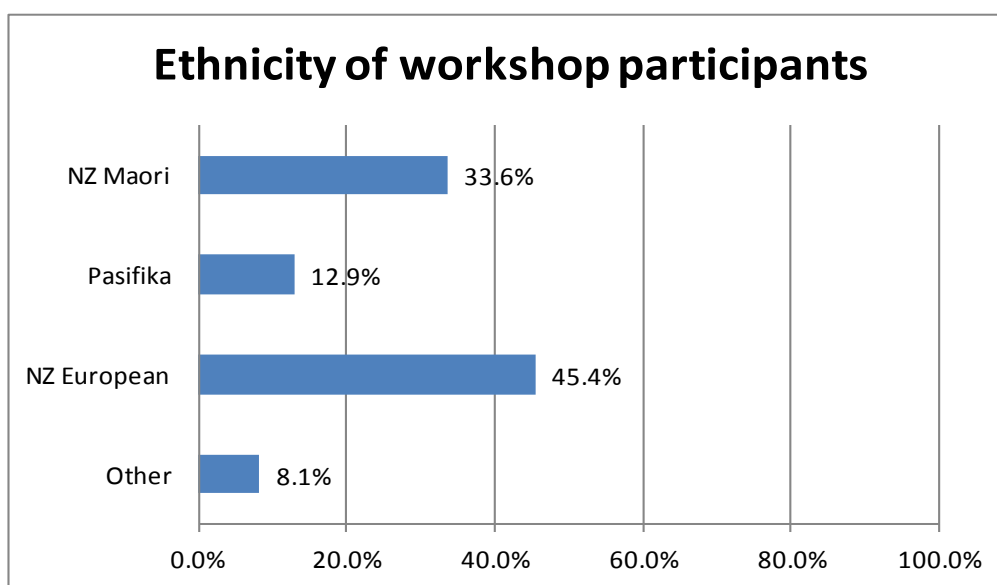
*It was fun working with parents and seeing them grow as they used the resources and appreciated the difficulties involved in learning to read. Some were amazed that their children were doing so well after a year or two at school. We will run this programme again next year, maybe in the evening. Buy in this year was for an afternoon while children had a sporting commitment at school at the same time.*

## F Gender and Ethnicity analysis of the workshop participants

Information about gender, ethnicity, relationship to the learner and workshop attendance was available for 1224 workshop participants.

On analysis of the ethnicity of the participants it was found that, possibly reflecting the increased participation of higher decile schools in 2013, New Zealand European was the dominant ethnicity of the workshop participants, making up 45.4% of the group (32.4% in 2012). The proportion of NZ Māori participants was 33.6%, comparable to 39.1% in 2012. Pasifika made up 12.9%, a decrease from 20.6% in 2012. A wide variety of other ethnicities made up the remaining 8.1%.

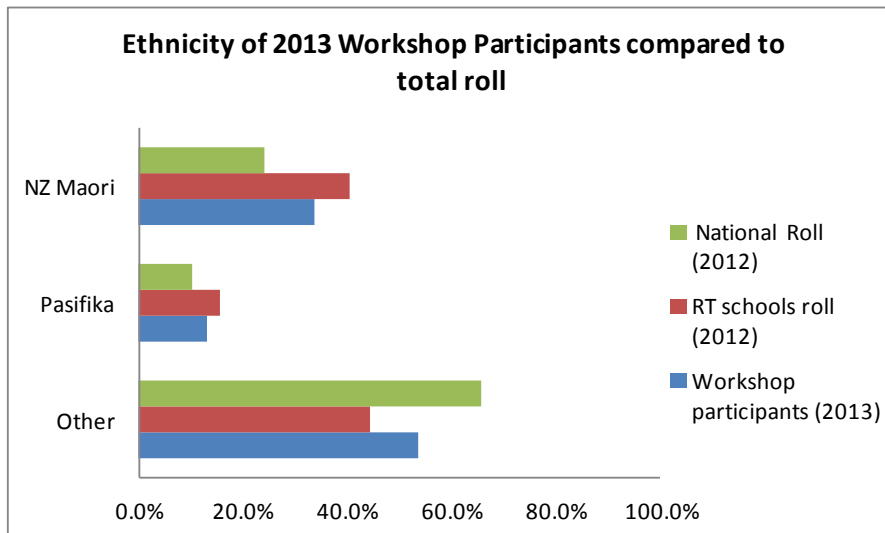
Ethnicity of workshop participants	Other	NZ European	Pasifika	NZ Māori
2013	8.1%	45.4%	12.9%	33.6%
2012	2.4%	32.4%	20.6%	39.1%



The surveyed schools who took part in the Reading Together Project had a higher proportion of NZ Māori and Pasifika students on their rolls than the national average for all schools. This is reflected in the above national average NZ Māori and Pasifika participation in the workshops.

	Other	Pasifika	NZ Māori
Workshop participants (2013)	53.5%	12.9%	33.6%
RT schools roll (2012)	44.3%	15.5%	40.2%
National Roll (2012)	65.7%	10.2%	24.1%

In chart form:



Workshop completion varied across ethnicities as can be seen from the following table:

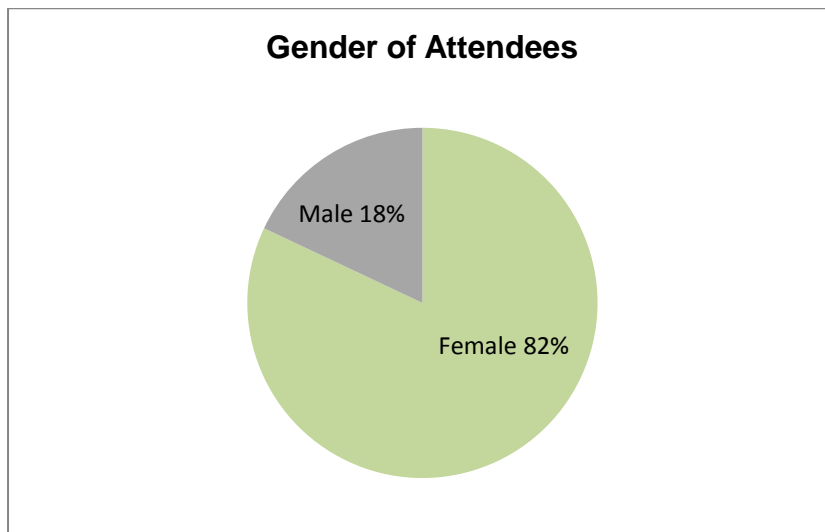
No of workshops completed	One	Two	Three	Four
NZ European	6%	10%	22%	61%
NZ Māori	9%	11%	24%	56%
Other	10%	15%	28%	46%
Pasifika	16%	20%	23%	41%
All	9%	12%	23%	56%

56% of all participants completed all four workshops, while 79% completed three or more.

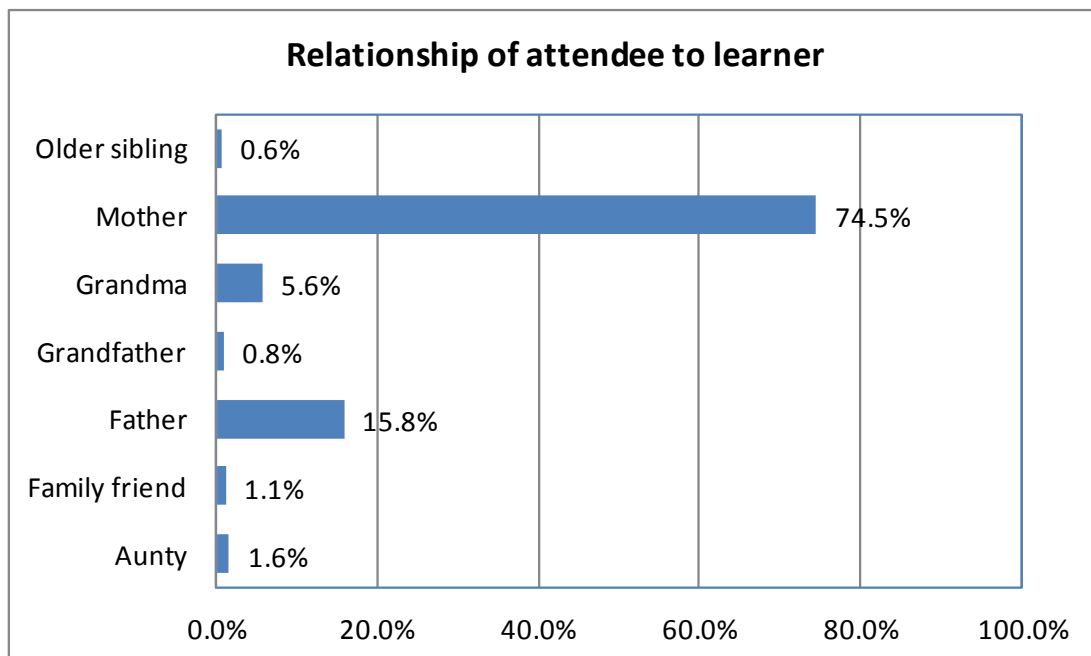
New Zealand Europeans had the highest completion rate for the four workshops, while Pasifika had the lowest rate. It is interesting that some schools noted that they intended to make particular efforts to target and engage Pasifika families.



The gender distribution of workshop participants was the same as in 2012 and continued to be predominantly female at 82%.



As would be expected, when the workshop participant's relationship with the learner was analysed, mothers made up the major proportion at 74.5%, similar to 73.6% in 2012.



89.6% of the participants had other children at school.

## 4 Summary

- 45% of the workshop participants surveyed were New Zealand European, 34% were New Zealand Māori and 13% were Pasifika.

82% of the participants were female, mainly mothers. Almost 90% had another school age child.

56% of the participants completed all four workshops and a further 23% completed three workshops.

- Caregivers learned new strategies to facilitate learning.

The strategies included setting aside a regular time for reading that is suitable for both adult and child, using the pictures as cues and talking about the book, allowing “wait time” for the child to correct their own mistakes, allowing the story to flow rather than correcting every word and increased use of the library.

*The workshops helped by giving me the understanding and importance of reading with my son. It helped me by learning that it's not just the words but the story that is important. It gave me the patience and ability to understand where he was at. Also more family time with limited tv and computer. Yay! I enjoyed learning how I could be a better parent by just listening and being patient with him.*

- Caregivers gained in empathy for the learner

Prior to the workshops caregivers often failed to realize how difficult learning to read is. These unrealistic expectations led to impatience and stress. Caregivers commented that after the workshops reading went from a chore to a pleasurable shared activity.

*Beginning of the course I can feel myself losing it. I get so mad with her that I give up. End of course. I've re-read the book so I know what is coming up. I add the words when I talk to her about the book that I know she is going to get stuck on. Now I'm not stressed and she thinks she is an awesome reader because she isn't making mistakes.*

- The learners demonstrated increased engagement with reading.

This increased engagement was manifested both in an increase in enthusiasm for reading and an improvement in reading level.

*My children are reading with passion and are developing a real “willingness to learn”*

*Grandma reports that the child is now reminding her it is reading time and it is time to turn the Television off. He is making good progress in his reading at school.*

Schools reported some dramatic improvements in reading achievement.

*One boy with a severe phobia towards reading is now more engaged in class. Reading level improved from 9 to 17.*

*Teachers noted that the children enjoyed listening to books and talking about what they had heard. Children were also becoming more adept at choosing books to read by themselves for enjoyment. They were also able to talk about what they had read. Children were feeling more self-confident about their reading ability and were showing more enthusiasm for reading. Teachers commented that they could notice when children read at home with parents and had fed that back to parents.*

- Relationships within the community and with the school were fostered.

In order to encourage attendance, workshop facilitators provided transport, food and crèches. Many of the workshop participants were alienated from school and struggled with reading themselves. The non-judgemental, welcoming atmosphere of the workshops helped break down these barriers allowing community ties to be established between families and with the school.

*It's the best thing I have done about reading. Through primary and high school I didn't really understand it much but now I know how important it is to read books to y kids. I like the sharing we do at the meetings. It is fun. Even my dad looks forward to the jokes and the riddles. It feels like we are supporting one another. School comment: This mum has now offered to help us with Kapa Haka and has already started teaching it to the older students in our school. This is an important start for us.*

The establishment of these ties gave caregivers confidence that they were not alone in their difficulties.

*For me it was comforting to know, that there is support within the school to help parents learn new skills to help their children to read. Also, it's nice to know that there are other parents in similar situations.*

A facilitator commented

*Parents are naturally forming a support group for/with each other and opening more and more up around their frustrations on reading with children – and life in general with children, as well as being confident to share their successes and have laugh along the way.*

- There were positive outcomes for the family/whānau

Older whānau members and siblings also became more engaged with reading.

*It has helped as we all started enjoying reading. Children with story books and comics while elders with the newspapers like the Advocate and Whangarei Report.*

*This really helps with my younger kids too who are at primary school.*

The parenting skills learned in the programme flowed through to other areas of family life.

*I keep the book (the workshop manual) handy so I can look at it when I'm about to lose my cool. I also use the tips gained from this workshop on everyday tasks at home. – e.g. picking up toys.*

*Thank you for this. It really helped with home life. Relaxing with my daughter and seeing her strengths.*

While male participation was low, participants recognized the value of male involvement and passed the skills that they learned on to their partners.

*This course has helped so much, it has made reading at home so much better, I love spending time with my children. This course has also helped me explain things to 'daddy', which has helped him read with the children.*

- Participants were enthusiastic about the programme

Workshop participants were enthusiastic about the strategies they had learned and the changes the programme had brought about.

*Thank you I really enjoyed this program. It was an awesome way to get to know other parents and to share our ideas together and our thoughts and fears about reading. It is amazing how much you can get out of a small book and what is important things to do etc.*

They felt that the Reading Together<sup>R</sup> Programme would be beneficial for all families.

*Important for all families to take part in this course, even those with good readers! I have teenagers and still feel this has really benefitted us as a family –with our little ones too!*

*From this programme I learnt not to get angry at them, I have learnt heaps. Now we don't argue anymore. We can read without the drama. All kids and parents should do this.*

*We have better family bonding now. It's an amazing reading programme. Everyone should be made to do it. I wish my folks did it then they wouldn't have given me such a hard time.*

The Reading Together<sup>R</sup> Programme is instrumental in breaking the cycle of disengagement with reading that exists in some whānau by providing strategies that fundamentally change attitudes to reading. The following quote sums up the benefits of the programme

*Partner used to get really anti with "M". (Not understanding the right word.) I gave him the book and told him off. It helped him to read it giving him some ideas. He has learnt to walk away and relax. It has helped with the older kids. God I wish I had done this course before cause it would have made so much difference with them. We have to break the cycle. It is helping with the whole family now in all their homework. We know what to do with the little one now.*