

## 2. COMET Manukau Family Literacy Programme –

*Elizabeth Rowe and Emma Davies*

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### A. Introduction

The Manukau Family Literacy Programme (MFLP) is an inter-generational literacy programme that provides both parent and child with learning benefits and tangible outcomes. Working alongside both teachers and their children, parents are assisted not only support their child's learning, but simultaneously improve their own education.



COMET's Manukau Family Literacy Programme is a 10-year development initiative that takes a holistic approach to inter-generational educational underachievement. This initiative achieved international prominence when it was taken to the Commonwealth Peoples' Forum in Uganda in October 2007.

The Manukau Family Literacy Project is based in a school or an early childhood education centre. A parent (or grandparent or close family member) and a nominated child enrol in the programme for a year. The programme has four parts:

- **Adult education:** a free, full-time adult education programme that runs approximately 20 hours per week.
- **Parent education:** this is linked to and woven through the adult education programme.
- **Child's education:** as is normally delivered by the school or early childhood education centre.
- **Parent and Child Time Together (PACTT):** this gives the adult student the opportunity to be regularly and actively involved with their child at their school or early childhood centre.
- The following diagram shows what is sometimes referred to as the fifth element of family literacy programmes – integration (Bensemman, 2004 p 4).
- Two partners are involved in all programmes – the community organisation that provides brokerage and support across all the partners (COMET) and the tertiary education provider who operates on all sites (AUT University). There are also specific partners for each site – a school and ideally an early childhood centre (on or very near the school site).
- Graduating adults from the programme move into higher-level programmes and employment. Some are now in the education labour market. A valuation by PricewaterhouseCoopers showed a \$200 per week improvement on family income, reduction in benefit dependency, reduced family violence, increased aspirations for children, and improved student achievement. There have been positive impacts on over 1,000 family members since the programme began.

- Nevertheless, there is not yet any significant national policy commitment to intergenerational learning programmes and, due to changes to tertiary funding pool criteria, AUT has withdrawn from the project from 2010, and its future is uncertain.

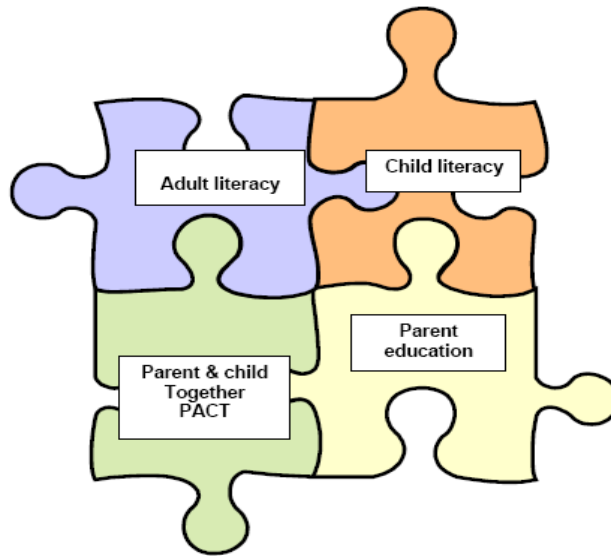


Figure 2: Family Literacy's four components

## B. Aims and objectives

In the Māngere, Otara, Papatoetoe and Manurewa wards of Manukau City, there are 37,365 working age adults with no qualifications, and 15,765 adults with only fifth form qualifications.

- Otara (43% of all working age adults)
- Māngere (41%)
- Manurewa (43%)
- Papatoetoe (40%)

There is a high correlation between children with literacy difficulties and parents with low literacy levels and few qualifications. Research demonstrates that by working with parents simultaneously with children, there is potential to break this intergenerational cycle. While the programmes focus on the adult learner in her/his role as both a future employee, as parent and family decision-maker, and as a community member, the Manukau Family Literacy Programme also seeks to build the engagement of families in schools.

In the programmes currently operating in Manukau, the families come from Pasifika, Māori and other cultural backgrounds. Working with parents simultaneously with their children provides opportunities for individual and family learning and strengthening of intergenerational relationships or whanaungatanga, all fundamental to positive whānau advancement.

MFLP has grown through six distinct phases of development:

*2001: Data analysis and problem-solving.* Literacy is an intergenerational issue related to family poverty and the educational attainment of adults in the home. Family disengagement

from learning was identified by schools as an issue. Two literacy summits in 2001 and 2002 explored ideas for holistic approaches to connecting families back into learning.

*2002 – 2004: Project Development.* A stakeholder group participated in discussions on the development of a new model incorporating adult education, positive parenting and relationships for learning. The four-component model is based on research evidence of good educational practice and cultural wellbeing.

*2003-2006: Pilot.* COMET became the 'lead agency' for model implementation at two pilot sites. The partnership included tertiary, school and early childhood centres.

*2003-2006:* Formative evaluation and summative analysis. The pilot process was accompanied by research that underpinned development. It showed highly successful outcomes. At the end of this period COMET moved from lead agency status to contracted provider of coordination services to AUT University.

*2007: Scaling Up.* COMET commissioned an Outcomes Valuation from PricewaterhouseCoopers that showed exceptional return-on-investment. The programme received government support to deliver to 80 families each year.

*2009-2010:* COMET is now engaged in redesigning the model to better fit new funding structures – but wider scaling and government policy commitment is still not achieved.

*(Vester, 2009 p 4)*

## C. Underlying principles and approach

As the result of a summit co-hosted by COMET and Workbase Aotearoa, COMET developed the Manukau Family Literacy Programme and created subsequent collaborations around the literacy needs of families. MFLP is based upon a model of active working partnership. This is evidenced at all levels – governance, management, funding and operationally.

Every time there are new people who participate in the programme – as learners or as professional staff – there is a need to review and renew ways of working together.

The philosophy of the programme enhances whanaungatanga, relationships between family members, and the partners who deliver MFLP.

These partners are usually the school, their early childhood centre/neighbours, and a tertiary partner. Through a focus upon delivering the four components – adult education, parent education, children's education and PACTT (Parent and Child Time Together), integration is achieved.

MFLP needs each partner's expertise and the tertiary partner is focused upon delivering an adult foundation learning programme. The school and early childhood partners will work within their school or early childhood curricula to ensure delivery of the children's education through normal curricula. Integration of these different curricula will be achieved through the PACTT component as all partners cooperate. "Coordinated planning and communication makes such partnerships possible." (MFLP Handbook – p 38-39)

As part of MFLP's initial development, those involved in the Bairds Otara and Rowandale programmes devised a set of goals for their sites at a professional development day in 2003. Essentially, the goals crystallised into the following areas:

- Foundation skill gains for both adults and children

- Build parents' levels of self-confidence and self-efficacy
- Raise and identify long-term aims for education and employment
- Encourage parents' involvement in their children's education
- Explore and adopt new parenting skills
- Build learning communities among parents, their children and participating institutions

(Bensemann and Sutton, p 5)

The Manukau Family Literacy Programmes (MFLP) are designed around the following elements:

- **Credit value** - The tertiary partner delivers a programme which provides the adult learner with valid credits for ongoing learning or future employment. The credit value offers a pathway out of poverty for families: the PricewaterhouseCoopers report valued this at over \$200 per week for a family.
- **Inclusiveness** - All four components must be balanced and included in the programme.
- **Intensity** - The programme is full-time, or of sufficient intensity to make a significant difference to families.
- **Duration** - The programme is long enough to sustain early outcomes over time.
- **Integration** - The programme is delivered on one site, or adjacent sites, by partners working together in an integrated manner.
- **Goal-directed** - Goals for the programme are related to education and/or employment outcomes for the adult; to literacy development for the child/children, and social well-being for the families within their community.
- **Flexibility** is required to provide a 'wrap-around' learning environment which also meets health and social services needs for the family.
- **Holistic** - The learning needs of the adults will prepare them for their roles as workers and parents and community members.
- **Professional cross-sector action** - The tertiary lecturer/teacher works with the early childhood and school teachers to ensure that the programme is delivered to meet the needs of the whole family.
- **Coordination** - COMET does not deliver the teaching components of the programme, but provides the coordination needed amongst the education sector partners.
- **Works to enhance the curriculum that already exists** - The children's education component will be structured around current curriculum, e.g. Te Whaariki, National English Curriculum, etc. The adult education component is negotiable at each site. Six programmes on Manukau sites from 2007–2009 delivered the *Certificate in Introduction to Early Childhood Education* offered by AUT. Appropriate courses will usually be offered at Levels 2, 3 and 4 of the Qualifications Framework. However, a wide range of literacy skills are presented by the learners, and literacy development is a key purpose for the programme.

(COMET website)

MFLP partners weave tikanga Māori values into the programme.

**Whakapapa:** Establishing our cultural identity and collective belonging through knowing and learning about our family relationships and genealogy. Ensuring the interconnection of all living things through the establishment of ancestral links. The need of individuals to maintain balance in their life by understanding their heritage.

**Whanaungatanga:** Acknowledgement and development of the whole person in relationship to *whanau* (family), *hapu* (extended family or sub-tribe) and *iwi* (tribe).

**Manaakitanga:** Actions and expressions of hospitality, respect and generosity towards visitors and others.

**Mahi Tahi:** A process that acknowledges equal partnership through a process of inclusion and collaborative consultation.

**Taonga Tuku Iho:** Acknowledging and incorporating the cultural aspirations of *iwi*, *hapu* and *whanau*, that validates Māori pedagogy and knowledge.

**Ako:** Reciprocal learning that acknowledges the importance of the whanau in assisting one another in learning. Each member having responsibility and obligations towards others in the whanau.

**Te Ao Hurihuri:** Acknowledging the need for bi-literacy and biculturalism in Aotearoa to meet the needs of our changing society.

**Te Ao Whanau:** Knowledge of the world and the contribution of Māori to the growth of the national economy and prosperity (Manukau Family Literacy Programme – Handbook for Partners 2009 28-29).

## D. What happens in MFLP

Each site is based in a school or an early childhood education centre. A parent (or grandparent or close family member) and a nominated child enrol in the programme for a year. The programme has four parts:

- **Adult education:** a free, full-time adult education programme that runs approximately 20 hours per week (plus some independent study), delivered by an accredited tertiary institution on the school site in a dedicated classroom. The programme develops the literacy skills of the adults and results in a tertiary qualification. The adult class is small – about 10-15 people.
- **Parent education:** this is linked to and woven through the adult education programme. It works to strengthen the relationship of parents as first teachers, builds the literacy levels of the family, and links to topics of importance to the students.
- **Child education:** as is normally delivered by the school or early childhood education centre.
- **Parent and Child Time Together (PACTT).** This is a key part of MFLP and gives the adult student the opportunity to be regularly and actively involved with their child at their school or early childhood centre. There are three types of PACTT:
  - Tahi PACTT: The adult is in the centre or classroom working with their child for a short time each day (10-15 minutes).
  - Roopu (Class) PACTT: This occurs monthly and enables the adult student and PACTT children to share a planned literary experience such as a library visit, craft presenter, etc.
  - Whanau PACTT: Each term there is an opportunity for whanau and extended family to join adults and PACTT children for a shared event such as a barbecue.

COMET's role is:

- To promote the MFLP intergenerational model
- To ensure that the MFLP intergenerational model is based on sound evidence of good practice
- To coordinate the creation of partnerships as a broker
- To facilitate the maintenance of partnerships and high quality delivery
- To be a first point of contact if any urgent matters arise regarding MFLP
- To ensure accountability and quality assurance mechanisms are established and maintained

*(MFLP Handbook for partners p 40)*

Potential partnerships arise out of networking activities and verbal or written expressions of interest. Visits are made to potential sites. Initial discussions through the coordinators will ascertain availability of learning space; consider governance and management capabilities, potential partners and proximity to each other, and how all four components could be incorporated into an effective programme.

COMET offers regular professional development for teachers and other personnel involved in the programme. Potential partners require understanding about MFLP and an opportunity for forward planning particularly as a programme begins. Developing meaningful and successful relationships are also integral. This can be achieved through professional development in the early stages and ongoing opportunities to build capacity and develop leadership for MFLP.

As partnerships evolve in the community, COMET supports them to move towards formal partnerships between the school and an early childhood centre. Criteria for selection of a site once funding is approved include:

- Low early childhood participation on school entry.
- Low socio-economic status of the families that make up the school's community.
- Demonstrated leadership and commitment by the principal and early childhood managers to MFLP.
- Demonstrated commitment by the board of trustees or the employing education organisation.
- Evidence of enough families in the partnership to ensure minimum enrolment numbers are reached.
- Availability of a school classroom able to be dedicated to the adult programme and available for the whole year. The room has to be large enough for approximately 18 adults and able to be equipped with (or be near) kitchen facilities so the adult programme can be independent.
- Proximity to the early childhood centre to enable daily Tahi PACTT meetings/events.
- Commitment by teachers at the school and early childhood centre.

COMET has the responsibility for providing the brokerage and facilitation across all the sites and partners. COMET employs MFLP Coordinators to facilitate the MFLP programme. A lead teacher is appointed for both the school and the early childhood centre at each site. Lead teachers play a key role in the recruitment and retention of students. They are responsible for building relationships with the MFLP students at their sites, and they assist with their pastoral care.

COMET has developed a detailed handbook and project manual for those involved in the operation of the programme.

## **E. Who's involved with MFLP**

The ethnic make-up of the programme is largely determined by the families within each school site's catchment. 82% of 2008 adults were Māori or Pasifika. The balance was migrants. Most are aged between 21 and 50, and most are female. Only four men enrolled. Six were grandparents of their nominated (PACTT) child. 78% were on benefits or had no income at the beginning of the programme, and 22% earned wages. Of the 82 adults who originally enrolled, 227 children were listed in their families, but 14 of the adults lived in households with additional children which may not be captured in the data, e.g. one woman had responsibility for six other step-children. About 30% have four children or more, and 28% had one-child families. As a minimum, therefore, 309 people were positively affected by the programme in 2008.

### **Graduation**

Forty-seven graduated, and 26 (55%) moved into other [higher-level] learning. Sixteen went onto AUT courses in early childhood education; ten graduates went on to courses in other institutions, including three to MIT. Courses included Māori, business administration, computing, English language and graphic art. Of the non-completers, one is deceased, two are looking after babies at home, seven are continuing to study but not at higher levels, four went into employment, and there is unknown data for 21. Six students who did not complete are repeating the programme in 2009, evidence of the life events (including health issues) that pose barriers to high-needs adult learners.

## **F. Decision-making and reporting processes**

Programme development was originally undertaken through a taskforce (2001-2003). This taskforce had a three-year development life and acted as a reference group through the design and early implementation phases.

The trust, as a council controlled organisation, is required to issue an annual statement of intent approved by the council, and present annual accounts and annual reports. The MFLP is included in these documents.

The MFLP programme development has been accompanied by evaluations of outcomes, commissioned from the University of Auckland and PricewaterhouseCoopers, and resources to support policy development and share programme design. A formative evaluation was commissioned by COMET to run alongside the development of MFLP. The formative evaluator attended early planning meetings, provided information about relevant adult literacy research and helped the first two sites reflect on what had been learned. After three years the same evaluator led a summative evaluation which collected data on the learning pathways of the adults who had taken part. PricewaterhouseCoopers was commissioned in 2006 to investigate the value of the outputs achieved through the programme, in terms of additional income to families, reduced dependency on benefits etc. COMET has prepared discussion papers on MFLP. The regular operation of the 2009 MFLP programme has also been documented.

## G. Innovative features

What makes family literacy different is the integration of adult learning and children's learning through the four different components. Without this integration, the Manukau Family Literacy Programme would be little different from other programmes (MFLP Handbook for Partners 2009 p 6).

## H. Achievements and outcomes

Since 2002, partnerships have been developed at eight sites, and the partners have run 28 programmes. Nearly 322 families, with an average of more than three children in each family, have taken part, resulting in impacts on nearly 1,000 family members. COMET provided coordination services across six sites for 80 families for the Manukau Family Literacy Programme for 2007, and again for academic years 2008 and 2009.



Figure 3: All MFLP students were awarded 'Adult Learners of the Year' at Manukau in 2005

In 2007 fifty-seven adults graduated from the programme with the AUT Certificate in Introduction to Early Childhood education at six sites.

The 2005 summative evaluation (Cain Johnson & Benseman, 2005) identified three major outcomes for adult participants.

Firstly, the programme has been successful in recruiting (and retaining a high proportion) of adult learners who have historically been under-represented not only in the participation statistics of New Zealand education, but also in the statistics of success in the educational system. The great majority come into the programme as failures of the schooling system, and in some cases, the tertiary system, yet those who complete MFLP have about a 90% attendance record.

Secondly, the MFLP has achieved a high rate of success in raising their academic skills. As an example, of the 23 grades achieved by students doing MIT study as part of MFLP, 20 were in the A range. The adults improved their self-confidence and self-efficacy, and also their long-term aspirations and ambitions.

There is evidence that many who have been out of the programme for some time are also achieving these ambitions – they are doing what they said they intended to do. As parents, MFLP learners have become more involved in their schools and more active in their child-

ren's education, both at school and at home. They are modelling new possibilities and provide valuable input for their children. There is some limited evidence that their children are performing better academically at school and are more confident and active socially than previously.

Only one Rowandale participant had been in paid work and none in tertiary education prior to enrolling on the MFLP. A year on from the programme:

- at least eight were in some form of employment;
- two were studying;
- and six are planning on doing a tertiary course in the next few years.

With the Bairds Otara groups, three were in paid employment and none was in tertiary education prior to enrolling in the MFLP. A year after the programme:

- at least seven were in paid employment;
- six were in a tertiary programme;
- and two are planning on doing a tertiary course in the next year.

While many have succeeded as a result of participating in this family literacy programme, it does not always achieve the same level of outcomes for all those who enrol. There have been withdrawals and some have not changed much, either academically or in broader terms as people and as parents, but most have. There is universal support for the programme and criticisms are limited to operational details.

Thirdly, the MFLP is having effects beyond the learners themselves. The MFLP is contributing to a more integrated community of educational providers where it operates and it is valued by the project's early childhood, primary and tertiary professionals for this outcome. The programme models a positive example of lifelong learning in action for the adults and children in the programme, for those professionals involved in the programme and increasingly, for children and parents not directly involved in the programme (pp 11, 12).

While some children did make considerable gains in their reading and writing, the data is not as consistent as that of the parents. Feedback from both teachers and parents show that one group of children had improved noticeably during the year and this gain was attributed at least in part to the MFLP.

Other students had been making good progress prior to becoming involved in the programme and this progress had continued. A smaller group of only a few children were felt to have made little or no progress. The assessments of the children before/after Running Records and Maths Strategy levels did show some positive gains for the MFLP children in comparison with their non-MFLP controls, but the differences were not great and the findings need to be treated with some caution because of methodological issues in these measures (the small sample numbers, control selection).

The uneven pattern of gain among family literacy children has also been reported in evaluations of family literacy children in the US (Bensemann, 2005 p 6-7).

A PricewaterhouseCoopers study of the programme's outcomes, which COMET commissioned in 2006, showed that families can improve their income by over \$200 per week by completing the programme (07/08 Annual Report p 12).

## COMET's role

Key stakeholders from the pilot were interviewed to find out more about how the model had been implemented. Respondents identified a number of roles undertaken by COMET during the pilot, including providing leadership and vision, guiding the alignment of the curriculum and the four components to get the most out of the programme, accessing funding, administration and support, providing crisis management and specialist expertise.

Almost all the participants thought that an independent broker was necessary in cross-sector projects such as the pilot because none of the partners on their own had the time, expertise or knowledge of other parts of the education sector to be able to take on family literacy alone. COMET was able to take a wider view and challenged partners to see outside their own sphere of knowledge (Bensemman, 2005 p 10).

## I. Future issues

There are over 4,000 families in Manukau where the adults have few or no qualifications.

COMET's discussion document, *A Tapestry of Understanding: Intergenerational Family Learning* (Houlker et al., 2006) correctly identified the structural difficulties in getting family literacy problems onto the policy agenda:

Policy problems are often addressed by de-constructing issues into constituent parts, both within and across government ministries. Current education programmes and courses are carefully geared to outcomes prescribed by different agencies, each of whom target resources tightly. When cross-sector collaboration is required (for intergenerational learning), programme providers face boundary issues and barriers to partnership. Intergenerational family learning programmes require a different policy approach: a holistic one that focuses not on individuals, not even on families, but on communities of need. This is a significant policy adjustment. While the community of need can be geographical (most frequent), it may also be culturally determined, or shaped as a 'community of interest'.

(Houlker et al., 2006 p 11)

Existing policy frameworks provide no incentives or direct pathways for institutions to engage in intergenerational family learning.

- Schools and early childhood centres that might offer IFL programmes need logistical support and funding to engage in learning for adults (which is outside their core business, and therefore, funding streams).
- Tertiary institutions require community partnerships, funding and support to engage in learning which includes learning outcomes for children and communities (which is also outside their core business).
- Community organisations require capital investments and professional expertise to engage in high-quality learning programmes (the capability for managing complex partnerships is important to programme success).

(Houlker et al., 2006 p 14)

That said, MFLP has been relatively expensive as an annual outlay, with approximate total running and development costs of \$1,200,000 over the three years 2003-2006, approximately \$14,118 per participant.

Despite its impressive rate of return (estimated by PWC to be \$9.41 for every dollar spent (PWC 2006 p 20), COMET has received support from the Todd Foundation and the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) to develop a customised programme to enhance flexibility and portability and reduce costs. Current estimates of programme costs are now less than \$10,000 per family.

There is not yet any significant national policy commitment to intergenerational learning programmes and, due to changes to tertiary funding pool criteria, AUT has withdrawn from the project from 2010, and its future is uncertain.

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