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Manurewa Parenting Hub: Creating Change

An evaluation of the Manurewa Parenting Hub

Report prepared for:

Family and Community Services
Ministry of Social Development

Report prepared by:

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February 2014



• **point**research





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Dedication

The parents at the Hub would like to dedicate this report to:

“Those who believe in the Hub and support what we do

The parents who have been brave enough to come through our
doors

Our Hubstars who have embraced change

and

All the parents we have yet to make a coffee for.”

Our Vision

*A community free of violence where families
have a strong sense of belonging, feel valued
and supported by coming together to build skills
and confidence to take their families forward*



Acknowledgements

Firstly, the researchers would like to acknowledge the people who gave their time to participate in an interview and share their expertise with us.

We would like to acknowledge the support of Linda Biggs and the staff of the Manurewa Parenting Hub, particularly fielding enquiries, answering questions, and hosting focus groups and workshops.

We would particularly like to thank the parents, volunteers and staff at the Manurewa Parenting Hub for participating in and assisting with this evaluation.

Special thanks to the Principals, Deputy Principals and Teacher Aides who spoke to us openly and demonstrated the trust and relationships so evident in this project.

Thank you to all those people who agreed to be profiled as a case study in this document.

A huge and heartfelt thank you to the parents who participated in our Photovoice project, such an amazing bunch, and not bad company either!

Disclaimer

This research was funded by the Ministry of Social Development

All findings and conclusions are those of the author and are not to be attributed to The Ministry of Social Development.





Executive Summary

Effective social support for families, particularly at-risk families, can have a positive impact on family functioning, and recent research has found that parents who perceive themselves as competent parents are more likely to parent in ways which promote developmental opportunities for their children.

More recently, there has been a growing understanding in our community that schools, whānau and communities, along with parents, also have a unique contribution to make towards the development of children and young people. As a result, school-based community initiatives which harness resources, services and support from families, whānau, schools and the community have started to develop in different parts of New Zealand.

The Manurewa Parenting Hub ('the Hub') in South Auckland is one such initiative. The Hub is a parent-led community-based initiative which responds to the parenting and support needs of the local population as they arise, and proactively supports local parents to engage with their children's learning on an ongoing basis. It is currently based in six schools in the Manurewa area, and offers services such as parenting support, learning support, practical sessions (e.g. cooking), budgeting, and fitness.

This evaluation has been commissioned by Family and Community Services at the Ministry of Social Development to:

- Examine the impacts and outcomes of parental involvement in the Manurewa Parenting Hub on families and children;
 - Gather longitudinal data to track the process, change and challenges for parents who have been involved in the Hub and who have gone on to employment as teacher aides; and
 - Influence practice within schools and communities by sharing the knowledge generated by this research.
- Most parents who participated in this evaluation believed that their involvement in the Hub had made a difference – in some cases a transformational difference – to their parenting. In particular, the parents said these differences were mostly due to receiving good, effective support from Hub staff and other parents, getting good information at one or more parenting sessions held by the Hub, making new community connections and having a better understanding how to support their children's learning and achievement.
- School Principals and Deputy Principals, too, feel that the Hub has impacted positively on their schools, believing that school families who were involved with Hub (particularly vulnerable families), were displaying more confidence and willingness to engage with the school, that schools were better engaging with their families and community and had understanding around how their schools could better support their parents, whānau and community.
- Outline history and approach of the Hub;

Whilst the evaluation did not specifically set out to document impact on children's learning outcomes, interviews with Principals suggest that Hub support of and engagement with families may be helping to raise individual student achievement.

Since 2010, the Hub has run a teacher aide programme, which places local parents in paid teacher aide positions at local schools. To date, 47 parents have been placed in Teacher Aide positions in one of ten local schools. Of these, 20 are currently employed using the Skills for Industry subsidies, and a further 19 have gone on to secure ongoing employment or have moved to further training and education. Parents who have become teacher aides report numerous positive personal and familial impacts such as improved learning outcomes for both themselves and their children, increased self-confidence and a belief they were more likely to secure further employment, increased family incomes and a greater sense of personal fulfilment.

There are a number of critical success factors which have contributed to the positive outcomes generated by the Hub. Chief among these is the intentional process of relational leadership which has characterised the way

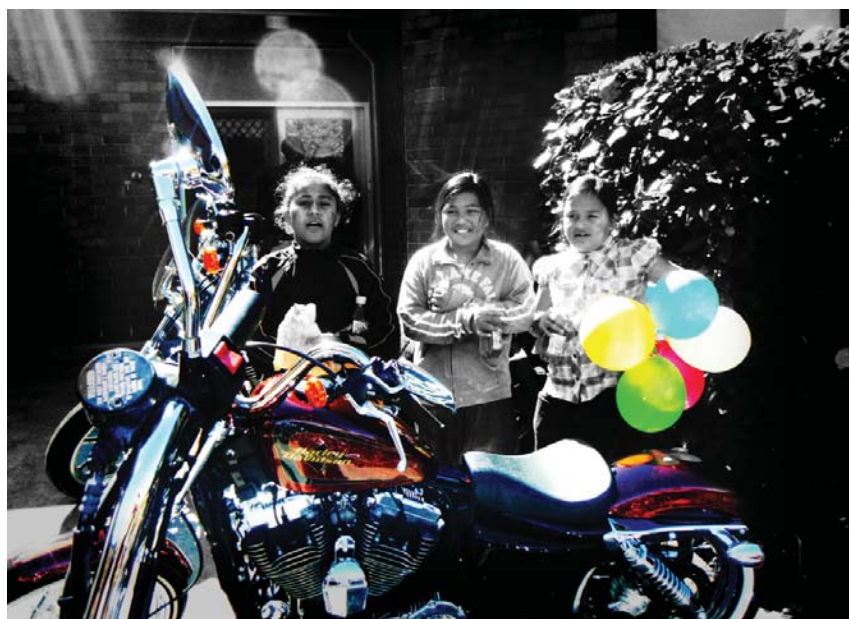
the Hub has worked. Relational leadership, which is the process of bringing people together to accomplish change and make a difference to benefit the common good, has been developed through relationships, trust, a strong shared vision, inclusiveness, a focus on empowerment, strong ethical practice and a focus on building relationships and competence through participation and process.

Other critical success factors include placing children at the centre of all that the Hub offers, support from participating school principals and school staff, high credibility in the community, ongoing quality development, financial accountability and school readiness.

Challenges for the Hub include recruitment, growth, development and ongoing resourcing.

There is growing interest in our communities and schools around connecting and engaging with parents, whānau and communities through hubs. It is hoped that this report may influence practice within schools and communities through sharing the knowledge generated by this research.

It's a big thing, to
have dreams for
the future
(Photovoice)





Introduction

"Being a parent can be really tough, and at times I felt really unsupported. The Manurewa Parenting Hub is a result of wanting to support other families."

Linda Biggs,
Manurewa Parenting Hub Manager

Effective social support for families, particularly at-risk families, can have a positive impact on family functioning. Recent research has found that parents who have good social support are more likely to perceive that they are more competent in their parenting role, and are more likely to parent in ways that promote developmental opportunities for their children (Rodrigo & Byrne, 2011).

The Manurewa Parenting Hub in South Auckland is an initiative which provides services to support parents as leaders of their families and encourages parents to develop self-efficacy and a sense of personal agency. Operating across six schools, the Hub offers services such as parenting support, learning support, practical sessions (e.g. cooking), budgeting, and fitness. The Hub also runs a teacher aide programme, which places parents in paid teacher aide positions in local schools.

More recently, the Hub has developed support for parents aimed at assisting them to confidently engage with their children's learning, and to champion other parents to do the same. This reflects a growing understanding in our community that schools, whānau and communities each have a unique contribution to make towards

the development of children and young people. Indeed, the greater the overlap of the spheres of influence of family, school & community, the greater opportunity for continuity between them, which has strong positive impacts on child development and achievement (Families Commission, 2010). This closer collaboration (between families, schools and communities) makes the most 'sustainable difference' for children when there is community involvement at all levels and multi-level partnership exists.

About the Evaluation

This evaluation has been designed to understand and articulate what difference the Manurewa Parenting Hub has made to participating parents and the impacts it has had on their families and whānau. In particular, it seeks to:

1. Outline the history and approach of the Hub.
2. Examine the impacts and outcomes of parental involvement in the parenting Hub on families and children.
3. Gather longitudinal data to track the process, change and challenges for parents who have been involved in the Hub and who have gone on to employment as teacher aides.
4. Influence practice within schools and communities by sharing the knowledge generated by this research.



Method

This research used a multi-method approach. The research methods were selected as they were inclusive, strengths-based and strongly informed by the principles of community development.

The methods included:

Photovoice

Photovoice is a research method which involves participants taking photos of things that are important to them, and is usually directed by a theme or an idea. It is most useful for use with populations which do not typically have a voice at a national level, such as single parents, beneficiaries, teen parents and children, as well as residents of highly deprived communities.

In this project, Photovoice was used to help parents understand and notice changes in their life and their parenting, and to articulate that change in their own voices. Seven parents took part in a series of Photovoice workshops over an eight-week period. At the conclusion of the workshops the parents had produced both a photo exhibition and a book based on their photos.¹

Interviews

Ten key informant interviews were conducted.

Key informant interviews provide opportunity to conduct individual conversations in a semi-structured manner and within a secure environment. Key informants in this project included staff of the Parenting Hub, parents (including some who had become teacher aides), local school principals and deputy principals and a local social worker.

¹ The photos from the exhibition can be seen throughout this document. The book is online and can be viewed at <http://www.mixbook.com/photo-books/interests/manurewa-hub-photovoice-9533453?vk=ymWDIdOAWC>

Focus Groups

Four focus groups were conducted with 19 parents who take part in the Parenting Hub ('HubSTARS'). Three groups were organised specifically for the research project, a fourth was conducted during a preparatory session for an upcoming literacy workshop.

In addition to the focus groups, researchers also attended a number of Hub events, such as a literacy evening, cooking demonstration and a parents breakfast. Informal discussions were held with many parents during this time, however these are not part of the formal evaluation.

Document review

The review of documents included annual reports, internal evaluations, website and other documents as determined by the project team.

Literature Scan

The literature scan for this project examined published and unpublished primary and secondary research from New Zealand and other English-speaking countries, related to the benefits of parental involvement in children's education and learning.

Publications reviewed included: journals and periodicals, books, reports by major research institutions or governments, conference proceedings, and 'grey literature' documents (such as academic theses and other unpublished reports) relating to parent support for children's learning and education.

Impact profiles

Impact profiles are narrative statements which summarise significant outcomes of participation. They can be presented as a story, a poem, or a personal narrative. Impact profiles are particularly effective at capturing "hearts"; they communicate the stories behind the data in a readable and accessible fashion. They are able to personalise the impact in a way that data can't.

Data for the five impact profiles was gathered via

document review, face-to-face interviews and focus groups.

About Manurewa

With a median age of 28, Manurewa has more young people than anywhere else in the country (Parliamentary Services, 2009). Nearly one-third (31%) of residents are born overseas (as compared to one-fifth, or 21%, for New Zealand as a whole) (Parliamentary Services, 2009). More than half of overseas-born residents are born in the Pacific Islands (54%). Manurewa has the largest population of Māori (30%) than any other locality in the Counties Manukau region (CMDHB 2011).

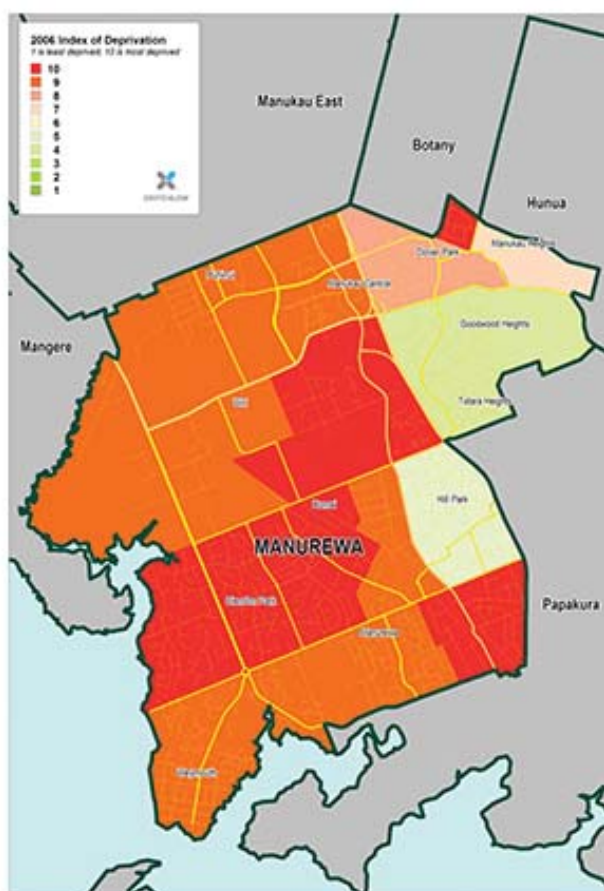
The median household income in Manurewa is \$50,600, as compared with \$59,000 for New Zealand as a whole. One in ten households (10%) is made up of two or more families. Home ownership rates are low, with just 49 per cent of residents owning their own home, as compared with 63 per cent for New Zealand as a whole (Parliamentary Services, 2009). Ministry of Health data show that in 2010, children in Manurewa had the highest rate of hospitalisation across the Counties Manukau District Health Board area for preventable conditions related to poor housing quality (CMDHB 2011).

Compared with New Zealand as a whole, qualification levels in Manurewa are low, with three in every 10 residents (30%) having no qualifications. Less than one-quarter (24%) hold post-secondary school qualifications, compared with 40% for New Zealand as a whole. The numbers of under-skilled, unemployed people in any community pose serious long-term issues for the local economy. For example, in 2011, New Zealanders with no qualification possessed, on average, two-thirds of the relative earning power of those with a Bachelor degree or higher (OECD 2013). The low-skilled workforce is also more at risk during periods of economic uncertainty; as an example

the unemployment rate in Manurewa grew from five per cent in 2006 to 20.2 per cent in December 2011 (MSD 2011). Low qualification levels and high employment also impact the numbers of those who claim income support; the percentage of people aged 15 and over in Manurewa who receive government income support (15%) is nearly double that of the New Zealand rate as a whole (8%) (Parliamentary Services, 2009).

Most school pupils are Māori (36%), or Pacific Island (37%), with the remainder made up of Pakeha (12%), Asian (12%) and other (3%). Of the 29 primary and secondary schools in Manurewa, 25 are a decile 3 or below (decile 1, n= 10, decile 2, n=10, decile 3, n=5). (Parliamentary Services, 2009). As evidenced by these statistics, social deprivation in Manurewa is high, with most areas accorded a deprivation rating of 9 or 10 (see Figure 1).²

Figure 1: Manurewa Deprivation Map



² The higher the Index of Deprivation (1 - 10), the more socioeconomically deprived an area is considered. An area with an index of 10 is therefore the most deprived.



The Manurewa Parenting Hub

Since 2008, the Manurewa Parenting Hub ('the Hub') has supported local Manurewa parents through the provision of services such as parenting support, learning support, practical sessions (e.g. cooking), budgeting, and fitness.

The Hub is not a service delivery organisation, rather, it is a parent-led community-based initiative which responds to the parenting and support needs of the local population as they arise, and proactively supports local parents to engage with their children's learning on an ongoing basis.

Operating across six schools, the Hub employs local parents to engage with and support other parents, and also runs a teacher aide programme, which places parents in paid teacher aide positions in local schools.

Structure

The Hub is governed by an executive Board comprising a Chairperson, four elected parent representatives and two educational representatives. The executive are actively involved in Hub activities and play a critical role in the creation of organisational policy and procedures.

The Hub is not a service delivery organisation, rather, it is a parent-led community-based initiative which responds to the parenting and support needs of the local population as they arise.

Day to day running is taken care of by three administration and four operations staff, all but one of who work part-time. Five of the staff members are local parents or grandparents, whose children and grandchildren attend, or have attended, local schools or early childhood education centres. Four staff were parents who originally attended Hub sessions and have now been mentored into paid employment.

The Hub reaches out to parents through its term-by-term activities timetable, through drop-in centres at some of the six schools and through one-off events in local schools such as literacy evenings or wearable arts competitions.

Parents are consulted regularly and informally about their ideas for activities, ideas and directions of the Hub. Parents may also offer formal feedback by attending term planning meetings when the next term's timetable is decided, they may feedback their ideas to a member of staff or they may simply drop an idea into a conversation or an email. In order to ensure that the timetable of activities aligns to parental need and current interests, ideas from parents are actioned wherever possible.

Each of the six local partner schools who are involved with the Hub³ provide venues for

³ Manurewa South School, Manurewa Central School, Weymouth School, Randwick



the corner

This is the corner where I would sit and wait for my girl.

I met Linita mostly on the street she would walk past me every day to pick up her kids and see me sitting there on the corner waiting for my girl.

One day we swap numbers and that is the start of a beautiful relationship. She asked if I want to go for a parent coffee group. I ask her how much? Where about is it? I wasn't sure if I want to go cause I am shy and I don't know anybody, but also is my self confidence, I don't want people to see me I am too big I am a Tongan. All the thought I had it wasn't good at all but I agree to go.

From the day I put a foot into the hub I only have to say my life has changed and I've never looked back.

I met this awesome lady named Vicky at the hub, we become very best of friends, she always makes sure that me and my girl are o.k. I will be forever grateful for this beautiful lady.

I don't sit on the corner anymore.





activities and parent's gatherings, advertise Hub happenings in their newsletter, liaise with Hub staff and often host one-off Hub events designed to bring parents into the school, such as parents' breakfasts or learning events (e.g. maths or literacy workshops). Their involvement is more than passive provision of space, however. As an example, Manurewa South School provides the Hub with a technology room as a drop-in centre as well as offices for the administration staff, and the Principal is a key supporter of Hub activities and an influential go-between between the Hub and school staff. Whilst Manurewa Central School has little in the way of physical space to offer the Hub, the Principal is a key supporter of the Hub philosophy and activities, and the Deputy Principal is an executive Board member. School principals at the six Hub schools, as well as principals from other local schools, are also involved with the Hub through the Teacher Aide programme, which places parents in paid teacher aide positions in local schools.

Vision & Values

In 2008, the Hub began with the aim of developing and implementing parenting support programmes in schools in the Manurewa area.

Since then, the vision has developed into:

"A community free of violence where families have a strong sense of belonging, feel valued and supported by coming together to build skills and confidence to take their families forward"

Parents who take part in Hub activities have named themselves "HubSTARS". An acrostic poem outlines the values expected of a HubSTAR:

Park School, Leabank Primary School, Roscommon Primary School.

Honesty

Understanding of each other

Boundaries – child-friendly conversations

Speak carefully – no bad language please

Treat others with kindness

Avoid offending others

Respect others ideas and opinions

The vision and values of the Hub are shared widely, and are displayed prominently in the Hub rooms at Manurewa South, Weymouth and Randwick Park schools.

History

In early 2008 Parenting Hub founder and Manager Linda Biggs was approached by the Ministry of Social Development to develop some ideas around supporting parents, whānau and community in South Auckland, which could draw on Linda's previous experience with similar initiatives. In September of that year Linda approached several school Principals in the Manurewa area with some ideas around what responsive support for parents in the local area might look like, particularly in terms of literacy and numeracy support. Four Principals in the Manurewa area were particularly keen to be part of the programme, and came on board with the idea, offering their schools as venues for workshops and assisting with communication and advertising as well as helping to identify 'lead parents' who could be mentored as part of the initiative.

By the end of 2008, sessions on literacy, and child and family safety had reached nearly 200 parents, many of whom participated in follow-on discussion groups.

Early on, a group of 'lead parents' were bought together over morning tea to discuss



community needs and wants. As a result of their feedback, as well as feedback gathered from the sessions and groups, the programme expanded to include sessions on maths games, school holiday ideas, drugs/alcohol information (delivered by a guest speaker), budget advisory service, family violence (delivered by a guest speaker), safety and a parents' expo.

Developing community relationships formed a key part of the approach, and in early 2009 several meetings were convened between local school Principals, Agency Managers (e.g. CYF) and staff from the Ministry of Social Development. Lead parents from each school continued to meet regularly to discuss the development of the initiative and started to play a prominent role in the sessions which were offered to parents. Gradually, the idea of a one-stop parenting information hub began to develop, where it was envisaged parents could get information about services in their area, attend parenting workshops, could join fitness classes, and access information on healthy eating and, most importantly, gain informal support from connecting with other parents from the community.

Up until this time, the programme was run from Manager Linda Biggs' car, using a mobile phone, a laptop with a mobile data connection and a car boot full of materials. The programme was run like this until July 2009, when Manurewa West School offered the use of a decommissioned dental clinic and the first 'Hub' was established.

As a result of having a base, and a physical presence, the Hub grew quickly and by the end of 2009 had outgrown the dental clinic. In 2010 Manurewa South School joined the 'hub family' and offered the Hub the use of a full classroom complete with kitchen, storage room and bathroom facilities. Two parents were employed part time to provide parent support and liaison, and a part-time administrator was employed.

In addition to providing a drop in space, the Hub continued to run programmes for parents, and between July 2010 and June 2011 ran 198 sessions with a total attendance count of 2942.⁴

In September 2010 the government implemented its 'Future Focus' package of welfare reforms, subjecting sole parents on the DPB to part-time work obligations when their youngest dependent child turned six. In response to parents' concerns about how the new rules would affect their families, the Hub began a 'return to the workforce' course which involved understanding the job market, job application and interview techniques, putting together a CV and visiting Dress for Success.

⁵ It became obvious during the programme that parents faced many barriers to returning to the workforce, chief of which was recent employment experience. The Hub then linked with WINZ and three local schools to run a Task Force Green programme and placed 14 parents as teacher aides in the schools, nine of whom continued employment as teacher aides, and two more who came off the DPB.⁶

The Hub became an incorporated society in July 2011, and continued to grow and strengthen community ties throughout the year, offering 236 sessions for which the attendance count was 3041.⁷ A further three parents were employed part-time in order to assist with parent liaison and administration.

In February 2012 a community services site at Manurewa Intermediate was opened, hosting

4 Please note here that *all* attendance is counted at Hub sessions. The attendance count may therefore exceed the number of actual parents reached, as parents may have attended more than one session.

5 Dress for Success assists women with job interviews by giving them suitable clothes, makeup, jewellery, shoes, handbags etc.

6 Please see the impact profiles on page 22 for stories from two of these parents.

7 Again, note that parents may have attended more than one session.



Funding is an ongoing issue. Partner schools support the Hub by donating resources and time, but are not required to give financial support.

services such as budgeting, Strengthening Families, Inland Revenue, Plunket and public health nurse services. The teacher aide programme continued to grow, placing a further 13 parents in June 2012. A part-time coordinator was employed in order to help lead the operations/parent liaison team.

By July 2013 the Hub had held another 230 sessions, for which the attendance count was 4453, and started reaching out to other community-based learning organisations, such as local libraries, to provide regular activity and information sessions for families attending the library. Ten schools had become part of the teacher aide programme, with around two thirds of the original cohort of teacher aide recruits either still employed or studying towards further qualifications. Parents continued to take a lead role in Hub activities, with teams of 'Hub champions' developed in schools in order to lead parent engagement, particularly with regards to leading learning activities such as literacy and maths workshops.

In just five years, the Hub grew from an idea around supporting parents, to a strong, responsive parent and community-led initiative. This evaluation will now consider the factors which have led to this growth, and the impact the Hub has had on parents during this time.

How the Hub works

Any member of the Manurewa community is welcome to take part in Hub activities; however it is set up primarily to cater for parents at each of the six partner schools.

Activities take place in each of the six schools, and are typically organised at least one term in advance so that parents are aware of what is coming up. In addition to participation in activities, workshops and sessions, the Hub provides a drop-in centre at Manurewa South School.

Funding is an ongoing issue. Partner schools support the Hub by donating resources and time, but are not required to give financial support. Family and Community Services at the Ministry of Social Development has been a key supporter of the Hub since 2008, and other funding comes primarily from philanthropic trusts, such as the Tindall Foundation, the Todd Foundation, the Trusts Community Foundation and the Nautilus Trust.

What the Hub provides

Drop In Centre at Manurewa South School

Parents from any school can drop in to the Hub at Manurewa South School during the week to use the computers, make a cup of tea or coffee, or chat to parent liaison staff members, who are also located in this room. This room is frequently used to host activities and sessions for parents, particularly practical sessions such as cooking or sewing. The Hub is intentionally set up to encourage informal discussion and connection between parents; early on, a large table which seats up to 10-12 people was purchased in order to promote informal "around the table" discussions was purchased and now forms the heart of the Hub.

Parent / family / whānau activities to support children's learning

A good proportion of Hub workshops and sessions are designed around up-skilling parents to support their children's learning, particularly in maths and literacy. Most of these sessions offer hands-on activities and interactive games so that parents can learn

new skills and then take the games home to play with their children.

The packs which are given to parents are produced at low-cost by the Hub; often a pile of laminating ready to be cut up will wait on the table in the Hub for a parent or parents with some spare time, and stray visitors will often be given a pair of scissors and put to work.

In the past 12 months the focus has shifted from Hub staff members running sessions and offering support, to a group of “champion parents” (including a number of dads) attending sessions and showing other parents how the games work.

Parenting Support

Supporting parents to become leaders of their families is one of the central aims of the Hub, and many of its workshops and sessions are designed around supporting parents to do the best job they can. Ideas for these sessions come mainly from parents, and have included:

- Rules of respect

- Children and anger
- Child and family safety e.g. vehicle safety, first aid, fire safety, civil defence
- Household routines – focusing on children arriving at school, on time and ready to learn.
- Behaviour management
- Positive parenting (three week) programme which includes household routines, understanding your child's feelings and coping with the resulting behaviours and instilling family values.
- Youth issues affecting our young people – gangs, drugs, bebo, facebook
- Celebrating Mothers –the roles a mother fills in her family and how important this role is.

Practical Support for parents

Helping parents with practical, everyday issues is also one of the central aims of the Hub. Previous workshops have included:

- Ideas for school holiday activities
- Healthy breakfast and school lunch ideas



The first cohort of Teacher Aides, 2011 (Photo courtesy of Manurewa Parenting Hub)

- Stretching the family budget
- How WINZ can support families
- Pastoral Care support available for families through the schools
- Introduction to Computing (six week course)
- Budget cooking
- Sewing classes
- Return to the workforce (six week course)

In addition to these workshops, Hub staff are frequently called upon to help parents in times of crisis, and have intervened on behalf of parents to secure emergency housing or food grants. In addition, parents often come to the Hub for help deciphering bureaucratic forms, to arrange transport, advocate on parents' behalf with Work and Income or Inland Revenue and to clarify the meaning of communication they have received from one or more government departments.

Parent support for other parents

The Hub aims to build community capacity around parenting by drawing on the skills and experience of parents in the community to help other parents. This takes many forms, such as parent 'champions' who demonstrate maths and literacy games to other parents, parent support groups such as the 'Chai and Chat' group recently set up at Manurewa South School, or employing local parents as parent liaison, who are often called on to provide informal support for parents.

Parents frequently 'step up' to help other parents and provide informal support, often over a cup of tea or coffee in one of the drop-in centres. These conversations draw on the collective parenting knowledge of those in the room, and, should parents need it, are supported by parenting and community resources which are easily accessible (e.g. wall posters, brochures, leaflets).

Teacher Aide Programme

To date, 47 parents have been placed in Teacher Aide positions in one of ten local schools. The Hub administers the teacher aide programme by preparing parents to return to work, finding teacher aide positions in schools, interviewing parents (alongside schools), placing suitable parents in teacher aide roles and coordinating the enrolment of parents in further qualifications and training. Funding for the teacher aides comes from schools and is partially funded by the Hub through the government employment schemes. The programme is now part of a Work and Income national pilot project

The role of the Hub centres on coordination, liaison and support. The Hub coordinates recruitment, interviews, placement and wage administration, supports parents to enrol in courses to gain qualifications, provides ongoing pastoral care and support to teacher aides and liaises with Work and Income to ensure that benefits are paid correctly. This support is critical. Many parents have been out of the workforce for years, and lack even a most basic CV or have little knowledge of interviewing or recruitment. Some do not have the paperwork and documentation required to enrol in tertiary courses, such as birth certificates or passports, and need help to obtain these. Others experience bureaucratic issues with their income support when they start part time work and often need help to get these sorted out. Once they are in work, many turn to the Hub for informal supervision.

Of the 47 teacher aides placed in schools, 20 are currently employed using the Skills for Industry subsidies, and a further 19 have gone on to secure ongoing employment or have moved to further training and education.

Evidence Review

Manurewa is an area of high social deprivation. Living in a high deprivation area, however, does not necessarily pre-determine poor outcomes. The field is complex, and recent research shows that there are many mediating factors.

Children who can picture a positive future, for example, are more resilient and better able to actively structure their environments (O'Dougherty Wright and Masten, 2013). Moreover, social development and sense of self is linked to academic development and researchers have found that parental engagement in children's learning can make a significant difference in the educational achievement of children and young people (Bull, Brooking, & Campbell, 2008).

Parental engagement in learning and education takes many forms including: good parenting at home; provision of a secure and stable environment; intellectual stimulation; parent child discussion; constructive social and educational values and high aspirations relating to personal fulfilment and good citizenship; contact with schools to share information; participation in school events; participation in the work of the school; and participation in school governance (Desforges, 2003).

The benefits to all children, and our most vulnerable children in particular, of supporting parents to engage with their children's learning should not be underestimated and there is increasing recognition of the value for young people's educational achievement in sustaining rich learning environments across traditional family, whānau, school and community boundaries. As children and young people spend less than half their time in formal educational settings, parents, whānau and

their communities and the interconnectedness of these spheres play a critical role in the educational success of children and young people (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2013).

Parental involvement in learning

As schools, families and communities have evolved their different methods of collaboration, tools have been developed to better understand the kinds of contact happening in this new paradigm. The tool below, developed by the John Hopkins University Centre on School, Family and Community shows a typology of six major types of involvement with regards to family and school partnerships (see Figure 1).

Generally, efforts to effectively engage parents with their children's schools and their formal education fall into three broad categories:

- School – home links
- Support and training for parents
- Family and community based interventions

Researchers at John Hopkins University have found conclusively that virtually all parents want their children to succeed educationally, and have developed a wealth of evidence to support schools to take a leadership role in establishing closer working relationships with families and communities for the academic

c o n n e c t



I first met Linda at a coffee morning.

The Hub had just started and I offered any help I could. I loved the idea of parents connecting, learning and sharing.

I became a staff member. Part of the team.

It was the start of a new season.

Maree - Photovoice

Figure 1: Types of Family and School partnerships

Type 1 – Parenting	Type 2 – Communicating	Type 3 – Volunteering	Type 4 – Learning at home	Type 5 – Decision Making	Type 6 – Collaborating with the community
Help all families to establish home environment to support children as students	Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication about school programmes and their children's progress	Recruit and organise parent help and support	Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions and planning	Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives	Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programmes, family practices, and student learning and development

and social benefit of their children (Epstein, 2001). Epstein's research has shown that parents and communities are very ready and able partners in the advancement of their children's education but that they often lack the guidance or support about how they might help their children at home.

School-Home links

The strengthening of links between schools and homes is an important platform for efforts to better connect families and schools. The evidence is clear that attempting to 'bolt on' efforts to engage parents in their children's learning to mainstream activities is unlikely to be successful. The literature suggests that parental engagement strategies are most effective when they take a 'whole of school' approach to parental engagement with school-based family and parent support activities that articulate the improvement of children's learning as a clear and consistent goal (Goodall & Vorhaus, 2010).

New Zealand research shows that strengthening links between home and school is of particular importance for children whose ethnicity or cultural heritage differs from those apparent within the school, and those

in lower socioeconomic groups. The Ministry of Education found that socioeconomic and ethnic differences in parental involvement show a pattern of the least involvement for families of children who could benefit the most from such involvement (Biddulph & Biddulph, 2003). Further, Wylie (1999) found that unemployed parents or those receiving state benefits were the least likely to have contact with their children's teacher. He also found that those who had recently migrated to New Zealand were also less engaged due to cultural and language difficulties and issues of stress, disruption and, in some cases, trauma related to their migration to New Zealand. Work to identify these groups within the community and better understand the barriers they face in engaging effectively in their children's education helps position schools to take a leadership role in finding new ways to make and maintain relationships with them.

The evidence suggests that parental engagement strategies should be outward facing and include evidence and expertise of other schools and community services as well as parent's views. It is clear that as parents must be willing to accept the transfer of knowledge and information from schools, but that schools should expect this to be a two way process,

Parents who perceive that they are more competent in their parenting role are more likely to parent in ways that promote developmental opportunities.

where they are also open to the benefit of new knowledge through the involvement of parents (Goodall & Vorhaus, 2010).

Supporting parental agency

Effective social support for families, particularly at-risk families, can have a positive impact on family functioning. Moreover, research has found that social support which is two-directional (that is, which allows people to both give and receive help) ensures feelings of mutual respect that contribute to relational satisfaction, and is most effective in supporting self-efficacy and personal agency (Gottlieb 2000). In contrast, support which is one-directional (such as that provided by formal agencies) can make the recipient feel inferior, vulnerable and inadequate (Rodrigo & Byrne, 2011).

Parents who perceive that they are more competent in their parenting role are more likely to parent in ways that promote developmental opportunities and minimise risk (Ardelt & Eccles, 2001). Schools have an important role to play in providing both formal and informal support for parents, indeed, Rodrigo and Byrne (2011) found that satisfaction with school support was directly associated with higher parental self-efficacy. The researchers also found, however, that parents who live in stressful or at-risk environments are less likely to be influenced by formal support around educational matters. They concluded that schools can positively influence parents sense of agency and self-efficacy (and therefore increase the likelihood of parents supporting their children's developmental and educational opportunities) by encouraging and supporting effective informal help (e.g. from friends, family members, neighbours) and increase satisfaction with school support, particularly for at-risk parents.

Parent support programmes

Programmes that enable parents to provide improved support to their children's learning have a highly positive impact on children's learning and development (Biddulph & Biddulph, 2003). These programmes can be in-house within schools or an outreach service provided to parents by the school where materials are sent home and parents are kept engaged in their children's learning via the telephone or internet. Henderson and Mapp have found that continued family involvement with children's learning appears to be a protective factor as children progress through the education system. The more families are able to support their children's learning and progress, the more their children tend to do well in school and continue their education (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

The content of parent support programmes varies from curriculum-based literacy and numeracy skills that train parents to teach specific skills to their children, through to programmes that provide parenting skills support to parents who are seeking knowledge and information. The latter are often designed to support parents to effectively manage their children's behaviour and provide them with the confidence and empathy to use their new skills effectively (Goodall & Vorhaus, 2010).

One of the earliest New Zealand examples of parent support programmes was the Mangere Home and School Project in which researchers trained parents of older low progress readers to tutor their children at home. Training was given to parents in their individual homes and researchers found that with the new skills attained through the study, parents were able to assist their children to make more rapid progress in reading than they would have otherwise

(McNaughton et al., 1981). This project has since been replicated several times in New Zealand with similarly positive results.

New Zealand research has found that there are broad benefits for parent support and training programmes. Parents who participate in these programmes are better placed to support both older and younger children using the skills and strategies learned through the programme. Parents who participated in these programmes also report that they developed more supportive and positive relationships with their children through the process (Biddulph & Biddulph, 2003).

Another New Zealand study highlighted that these results hold constant even with families within which literacy is itself an issue for adults. A study with Cambodian-Khmer speaking mothers in which they supported their 6-7 year-old migrant children to learn to read found that, although the mothers had little formal education and relatively few English words, they were able to improve their children's rate of reading and progress at school (Glynn et al., 2000).

Family and community based interventions

The final grouping of efforts to engage families with schools falls under the heading of family and community-based interventions. These interventions involve a broader range of stakeholders such as community and social service agencies and draw into the mix a broader range of expertise from agencies specialising in mental health, nursing and community services (Goodall & Vorhaus, 2010). Moreover, strong social networks and community ties provide invaluable opportunities for children's learning (Biddulph & Biddulph, 2003).

Some of the most robust evidence in meta-analyses of the impact of parental engagement in children's learning falls into the category of family learning programmes; with the most extensive and robust evidence pointing to the positive impact of family literacy, language and

numeracy programmes on children's academic and learning outcomes (Goodall & Vorhaus, 2010).

Support for families to better engage with their children's education comes in many different forms. There is evidence that for some families, tough financial circumstances mean that simple interventions like the provision of educational resources (such as children's books) have been associated with increased academic achievement for children (Biddulph & Biddulph, 2003).

Benefits for vulnerable children

Effective partnerships between families, schools and communities are a critical opportunity to ensure some of our most vulnerable children achieve educational success. Longitudinal New Zealand research has found that children whose parents had no involvement in their school scored less well than their peers on maths, literacy, communication, perseverance and fine motor skills (Biddulph & Biddulph, 2003). Collective working between families, schools and communities, who each share in the responsibility of raising young people well equipped to thrive, can ensure no young person is left behind.

Children who grow up in families with complex social challenges like poverty, mental illness, substance abuse, domestic violence or child abuse, or deprivation of stimulation or affection have significant challenges in achieving within the education system in comparison to children whose home environments are secure and stable (Tunnard, Barnes & Flood 2008). Poverty is a significant issue facing a huge number of New Zealand children with over 270,000 or 1 in 4 New Zealand living in poverty (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2013). These children have significantly increased risk of hyperactivity, truancy, mental health disorders (including suicide), delinquency and low levels of literacy and self-esteem (Biddulph & Biddulph, 2003). Whilst the evidence is clear, however, that the benefits of genuine home school collaboration

has the ability to significantly lift children's academic achievement, it is also acknowledged that this is most difficult to do in schools where the interplay of complex social issues make families 'hard to reach.' Simply put, the children for whom this would make the most difference are the most difficult group to engage.

There is a strong relationship between maternal educational achievement and children's own academic achievement (Wylie et al., 1999). Groups like the Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty have strongly recommended increasing government support to young people who are pregnant or parenting to ensure they receive effective support to remain engaged in education. This is a key potential site of intervention where families, communities and schools can work together to support young people who wish to both parent and achieve an education. The group have suggested an expansion of the number of Teen Parent Units, encouraging teen parents to remain in their local school by ensuring they get the support they need to do so and by monitoring and reporting on the achievement and post-secondary school transition of young parents (Office of the Children's Commissioner 2013).

There are particular benefits in closer relationships between communities and vulnerable children and their families. Researchers have found that social development and sense of self is linked with academic development; and conclude that communities which have strong social networks (Pasifika church and Māori cultural connections) provide invaluable opportunities for children's furthered learning, particularly in the development of cultural identity and sense of belonging that aid children's sense of wellbeing (Biddulph & Biddulph, 2003).

A number of New Zealand studies have shown that mainstream school culture is not always supportive of non-Pakeha children's sense of identity and wellbeing (Clark, 1996). Increasing the overlaps between families, schools and communities creates opportunities for cross pollination of values, cultures and experiences,

which have the ability to sensitise academic institutions to the needs of families and communities. This type of true collaboration has the potential to result in the evolution of mainstream school culture to provide a more inclusive, diverse environment for young New Zealanders.

Overlaps between families, schools and communities also create opportunities for schools and communities to be more responsive to the needs of families. Increasing the amount of 'informal contact' between schools and families creates opportunities for services and support to be offered to families with complex needs. There is an increased responsiveness to the needs of individuals and families when there is good connectivity between schools, families and communities. This can mean support and services can be offered early and intervention monitored to ensure that minimal harm is done to children living with complex social and health needs in the long term.

When they work in isolation, families, schools and communities are able to achieve only limited results. Traditionally, by working in silos without knowledge or support of each other, organisations, communities and schools were achieving a fraction of their potential. Furthermore, the impetus was on the parents to navigate the unfamiliar terrain of the education, social and health service sectors in order to obtain services and support for themselves and their children. A great amount of work has been done in some communities to break down these silos and remove barriers for especially vulnerable families to access the services and support they require. The most recent report from the Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty has acknowledged the value of working together to integrate key social and health services in places where people already gather and where infrastructure exists to support service provision such as schools, ECE providers, churches, community hubs and sports clubs (Office of the Children's Commissioner 2013).

When children and parents have good local access to institutions such as libraries, medical

a m b i t i o n

I would like to have my own business one day.

I want to be my own boss.

I would like my vision to come to life, not to be part of someone else's



facilities and social service agencies, children's achievement can be enhanced beyond the level which schools can achieve alone (Biddulph & Biddulph, 2003). This has led to innovative projects like Victory Village in Nelson where the local primary school is co-located with the community centre for maximum impact for the families, school and to the community (Families Commission, 2010). These initiatives represent a new wave of broad collaboration, which harnesses resources, services and support from families, whānau, schools and the community towards a collective goal of ensuring young people thrive in education.

Student engagement in learning

It's widely recognised that young people need the full support of their parents in order to maximise their education potential. The increasing recognition of the value of this involvement has been a key focus for governments and administrations across the western world over the last fifteen years who seek new strategies and programmes to enhance young people's educational attainment through recruiting their parents as allies and partners (Desforges, 2003). This focus is seen as a way to lift people out of intergenerational poverty and welfare dependence, boost the economy and have myriad other social and economic benefits for individuals and the state.

The evidence is unequivocal that parental engagement makes a significant difference in the educational achievement of children and young people (Bull et al., 2008). In their 2002 review of 51 studies from the USA, Henderson and Mapp conclude that there is a "positive and convincing relationship between family involvement and benefits for students" (p24). This positive relationship holds firm for

families across all economic, racial/ethnic, and educational backgrounds and for students of all ages. Among the studies reviewed the benefits for students include:

- higher grade point averages and scores on standardised tests or rating scales
- enrolment in more challenging academic programs
- more classes passed and credits earned
- better attendance
- improved behaviour at home and at school
- better social skills and adaptation to school

Numerous studies have found that literacy programmes to support learning for low-literate parents (particularly mothers), translate to positive influences on their children's academic achievement (Biddulph & Biddulph, 2003). This evidence appears to illustrate that parents' literacy levels are not a major barrier to engagement in children's learning.

Researchers, however, have noted that not all forms of engagement have an equal impact on student achievement and caution that it takes more than parents being involved in school to produce improved learning outcomes. The research highlights that 'engagement' rather than 'involvement' is critical in translating education and community partnerships into improved educational outcomes for children. A number of studies found that some forms of parent involvement with the school (communications with the school, volunteering, attending high school events, parent to parent meetings) appeared to have little effect on student achievement, especially in high school (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Parental engagement makes a significant difference in the educational achievement of children and young people (Bull et al., 2008).

Wider impacts

The Ministry of Education's publication *The Complexity of Community and Family Influences on Children's Achievement* on Children in New Zealand: Best Evidence Synthesis highlights the research evidence about the effectiveness of school-home partnerships for children's learning:

"A key message emerging from the New Zealand and international research is that effective centre/school-home partnerships can strengthen support for children's learning in both home and centre/school settings. What is remarkable about such partnerships is that when they work, the magnitude of the positive impacts on children can be so substantial, compared to traditional institutionally-based educational interventions. The benefits cannot only enhance the well-being, behaviour and achievement of children and young people, but can also persist into adult life and civic participation. Some studies have also demonstrated considerable benefits for the parents and whānau involved in constructive partnerships."

(Biddulph & Biddulph, 2003)

New Zealand research into the wider implications of the role of Early Childhood Education (ECE) providers within communities in Porirua and Wellington found that parents greatly valued the support they received through their children's participation in ECE. "ECEs are frequently valued by parents for social reasons, as they have formed friendships with the staff and other parents, and their children had attended with neighbourhood children. ECEs in this context became "an integral part of the fabric of family life, part of the overall network of community relationships" (Lythe 1997, p.64). This research highlights that there is potential for ECE and schools to play an increasingly integral role in the lives of families as places where communities can grow together.

True collaboration between families, schools and communities in achieving the best results for young people's educational achievement

will mean that both schools and families practices may change. As schools increasingly open themselves to families and communities who become integrally involved in the school's operations, there is a multitude of positive impacts for families, schools and communities. True collaboration requires working in partnership towards a shared goal and schools that have achieved this have seen a marked shift in business as usual.

Researchers are clear that successful relationships between families, schools and communities require reciprocity and respect, where support programs are designed to add to (not undermine) and where structured, specific suggestions rather than general advice is provided and on supportive group opportunities as well as opportunities for informal one to one contact (Biddulph & Biddulph 2003). Researchers Henderson and Mapp (2002) have illustrated that schools that succeed in engaging families from very diverse backgrounds share three common key practices. They contend that these schools:

- Focus on building trusting collaborative relationships among teachers, families and community members
- Recognise, respect and address families' needs, as well as class and cultural difference
- Embrace a philosophy of partnership where power and responsibility are shared

Examples

Victory Village

As discussed previously, Victory Village Nelson is an innovative partnership between Victory Primary School and Victory Community health which have co-located a community "hub" within an existing school and offer health, social, education and recreation activities within school grounds. Victory is a suburb of approximately 1,900 households in Nelson. The community in Victory is culturally diverse and has a high concentration of relative deprivation, with a significant number of residents on low incomes or accessing government benefits. The

c h a o s



As a father,
I'm constantly
calming the
chaos.

As a Hubstar,
I've learnt that
it is ok for some
chaos, as long
as my family
is fed, dressed
and at school
(before the bell if
possible)

hub provides one-to-one health services for residents, as well as a large range of recreational and social programmes and community events. The project was established in the early 2000's when the school was looking for a solution to the challenges it had to provide a strong learning environment and a large amount of frustration existed about a perceived lack of social services for high need families in the area. The partnership was evaluated by the Families Commission in 2010 and was found to have a number of positive outcomes with student participation, wellbeing and achievement all showing a strong pattern of improvement over the period of the school's shift to a family-centred model of education and the development of Victory Village (Families Commission 2010).

Manaiakalani

Manaiakalani is an e-learning initiative involving seven decile 1 schools in West Tamaki (Auckland), which aims to raise student achievement outcomes in speaking, listening, reading and writing and student engagement generally through the use of technology. The key objective of the project was to empower students with an evidence-based belief that their personal voice is valuable, powerful and can be heard around the planet in a decile 1 community. Many researchers have found that using information and communication technology (ICT) to support school curriculum is a powerful tool for learning (Gleeson 2011). The project issued one-to-one devices (Netbooks) to students involved in the pilot and wireless networks were installed throughout all schools to ensure students had access to their work anywhere within the school. Teachers were enlisted and trained to deliver content in a new way called 'The Literacy Cycle' which has three main components – Learn, Create, Share. This framework was used for all subjects. A 2011 evaluation of Manaiakalani involving 465 students from 18 classrooms who had been using the new approach for a full year found that both student achievement (with regards to literacy) and student engagement had both made significant improvements.

Tower Hamlet

The Tower Hamlet Partnership is an international example of innovative efforts between schools, communities and families. Tower Hamlet is located in East London and has some of UK's most culturally diverse residents with around 110 languages spoken by school pupils within the borough. It is also an area that experiences some of the highest population density rates and worst poverty in Britain. The Tower Hamlet Partnership published their first Community Plan in 2001 and it involved all key stakeholders in the borough – residents, the council, the police, the health service, housing associations, other public services, voluntary and community groups, faith communities and businesses. The aim of the plan is to reduce inequalities and poverty, strengthen cohesion, ensure the Tower Hamlet communities continue to live well together and recognise that everyone in the Tower Hamlet community has a part to play in achieving these goals.

One of the themes in the Community Plan is 'The Prosperous Community' and makes the connection between the lack of good support and re-training opportunities for borough residents to break the cycle of joblessness. This stream has highlighted the need for high quality education opportunities to be available for all residents from those entering nursery and primary school to older people and pensioners wanting to learn new skills. The priorities for the plan in this area are:

- Investing in the under 5s whose development provides the best possible foundation for long term success
- Providing high quality schools, so that young people acquire the knowledge and skills they need to fulfil their full potential
- Providing continuous learning opportunities, so that anyone can learn basic and new skills at any age

The Community Plan runs until 2020 and as such no evaluation is currently available as to its success in achieving its objectives.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Hub

What are the outcomes for parents who have participated in the Hub? Are there wider impacts of participation, such as on families and children's learning? What benefits are there to schools?

In order to help answer these questions, interviews were conducted with parents, teacher aides and a school and written into 'impact profiles', which detail the impact of participation in the Hub and Hub activities. The data in these profiles has been used to evaluate impact as well as understand some of the critical factors of success, which are detailed on page 36.

Impact Profiles

Kara – Teacher Aide

Single mum Kara rises at 6am every weekday morning so that she and her children can catch the 7am train and then a bus to Manurewa Central School, where her children attend and Kara works as a teacher aide.

For Kara, this isn't a big deal. It's just what they do. "It is fun for my kids," she says.

Kara's son started at Manurewa Central School in 2007, and when Kara shifted out of the area she was determined that her son would continue to attend the same school. "When I was growing

up we moved a lot from school to school," she says. "I didn't want him to feel the way I felt when I was little." Her younger daughter also attends the same school.

In early 2011 the Manurewa Parenting Hub started advertising for teacher aides. Kara's son bought home an application in his school bag, and gave it to his mum. The timing was perfect, considering that Kara had made a resolution in the New Year to take any opportunity that came along.

"When I read the letter that came with the application form I thought this must be it," she says. "I thought I would try out. I enjoy kids and I am like a big kid too."

While her children were at school Kara would often spend hours at the Manurewa library, where she taught herself to type and

learned how to put a CV together. She put these skills to use and applied for a teacher aide position. It wasn't as easy as it sounds. Being a stay at home mum on a benefit had sapped a lot of Kara's confidence, and her work experience was restricted to a job in a shopping mall as a teenager.

It was challenging in the beginning, when I was given jobs like sharpening pencils but I started looking at it differently. I started thinking I am going to make sure these are the best sharpened pencils this school has ever had."

"It was very scary," she says. "Being a stay at home mum I wasn't really going out socialising and so when I had to take this step to apply it was definitely scary for me."

Kara was shortlisted for the position, and was called in to the school for a "nerve-racking" interview.

"Being honest was the main thing" she says.

The interview panel saw Kara's potential and liked her can-do attitude. She got the job.

"I was ecstatic," she says.

From the beginning, Kara was determined to make the most of her new job.

"It was challenging in the beginning, when I was given jobs like sharpening pencils but I started looking at it differently. I started thinking I am going to make sure these are the best sharpened pencils this school has ever had."

Kara's job has had many positive impacts for her and her children, from helping financially to helping Kara regain her self-confidence.

"On the benefit it was a struggle living week to week. I didn't think I could do much but getting a job really helped me see that it is self-belief."

Kara has noticed that her children's school work has improved.

"Working with children has definitely helped me to go home and teach some skills I have learnt on the job," she says. "My children are really happy and proud of me."

Her family is also proud, and Kara notes that she has been a role-model for her younger brother.

"I think it helped my younger brother because he was on the X-Box all day so I think it made him see 'my big sister has got a job'. He is on top of it now and he is going to work."

"It helped my younger brother. He was on the X-Box all day so I think it made him see 'my big sister has got a job'. He is on top of it now and he is going to work."

Kara is thankful that she seized the opportunity that was offered to her when her son first bought home the application.

"The whole opportunity of coming here was really massive for me. I owe it to Linda because she is the one that gave me a chance. I am so happy. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the Hub," she says.

Mike – Teacher Aide

Single dad Mike first became involved with the Manurewa Parenting Hub after taking part in a workshop focussed on returning to the workforce.

"The first thing they did was made me coffee," he says.

Mike became an enthusiastic supporter of the Hub, and was voted on to the Board as a parent representative. In 2011 he applied through the Hub for a teacher aide position at a local school.

"It wasn't something that I would have ever thought about doing, but as a single parent it was a job that fitted in with school, and was the perfect fit," Mike says.

Formerly a contract technician, Mike initially found parts of the teacher aide role a bit tricky.

"I remember the first day in class the teacher made me tell the class a bit about myself and I wasn't comfortable with that," he says. "Over the years it has got a bit easier".

As one of only six male staff members at the school (including ground staff), Mike appreciates that his role often extends beyond his teacher aide position. He usually spends his lunch times playing sports on the field with the children.

"A lot of children at this school are from families that are separated and would be without a male figure around."

Mike likes being part of something where he can see the difference he is making to children and their learning.

"It is good to have something you know is helping the children... You teach them something and see them click."

His role has also helped him understand what is expected of his daughter and her learning.

"Because I am in that learning environment I know what is expected", he says. "Things have changed so much from when I was at school, like just basic adding when we used a column. They don't do that anymore. Without being in here I would have shown her how we did things and she would come back to school doing the working out wrong."

Mike would recommend the teacher aide position to other parents in a similar position.

"Although the pay isn't great, it is good having a little bit of extra income. And in a social environment it is good to be able to say you work at a school as a teacher aide."

"I didn't think I could do this job very well but they say they can't work without me now. I would say it is good, and I enjoy it."

Weymouth School

A suburb surrounded on three sides by the Manukau Harbour, Weymouth is a community of just over 9,000 people in Auckland's South. "We have a very strong community," says local school Principal Janice Vermeulen.

Weymouth School, which is 122 years old, is at the centre of the community. "There is no big shopping centre and there is no big church", explains Janice. "The school is where it all happens and so this is where people come."

Three years ago, Weymouth school began a journey of partnership with parents. Inspired by a sabbatical tour as well as support from the Springboard Trust, Janice came back to school brimming with new ideas.

"Overseas, I went into one school in particular and literally kept bumping into parents. I would walk around one corner and bump into one parent and walk around the next corner and walk into the next parent. Eventually the penny dropped. It was about getting your parents involved and using the strengths and talents you have around you."

The partnership with parents at Weymouth School began with a parenting programme.

"I went to my staff and said 'tell me what your talents are.' I had one teacher saying I can cook beautiful Indian food, someone else said I can do public speaking. Another person said I am really good at walking because I want to lose some weight. So we released those teachers to write programmes."

At first, getting parents involved in the parenting programme was hard slog.

"In the beginning there were some programmes where nobody turned up and

"I didn't think I could do this job very well but they say they can't work without me now. I would say it is good, and I enjoy it."



i n s p i r a t i o n

Being at the hub inspires me to try new things.

I have learned to knit and crochet, and not be scared of cooking.

I was so proud to show everyone what I'd made.

“It has been so transformational in a sense of school lead to parent lead. We already have nine or 10 champion parents and I promise there are a whole lot of people behind that.”

we were heartbroken,” explains Janice. “But I used to say we only need one person to come because behind them there is a whole wedge, a whole whānau.”

In addition to the parenting programmes, Janice and Assistant Principal Michael Fletcher instituted an actual open-door policy.

“We told our staff Monday is going to be open day and parents can come in and watch.” For Janice, the open door policy was about familiarising parents with the school and what was required of the students. “We have these high expectations about literacy and numeracy and raising students’ achievement,” she says, “but we were not giving our parents a chance to see what that looks like.”

Michael agrees. “It was a huge jump because it is one thing to say to your teachers you have an open door policy but it is another thing to say that they were to physically have their doors open every Monday.”

Soon, Janice and Michael noted a shift in attitudes in the school. “The biggest shift was the change in mind set around this is not the school’s school, this is the people’s school,” says Janice. “Once people began getting that idea it began changing.”

Soon, the parenting programme got to the stage where it needed more than what the staff at the school could offer. At the same time, the school’s dental clinic was decommissioned, offering an ideal venue

for a community ‘hub’. Janice needed help to grow the programme.

“I had the venue, I had the will, I had the staff, I had the enthusiasm and everything but I just needed something more.”

Janice put the word out, and soon got a phone call from Linda Biggs from the Manurewa Parenting Hub asking how she could help.

“(The relationship with Linda) was significant because she had these contacts that I didn’t have,” Janice says. “Linda knew a mum who had just moved to our school who had been involved in another parenting hub and who was perfect in helping us grow our hub. So what Linda managed to do was take it to the next step.”

The involvement with the Manurewa Parenting Hub is helping to turn Weymouth’s parenting programme from one which is driven by the school, to one which is driven by parents.

“It has been so transformational in a sense of school lead to parent lead,” explains Michael. “We already have nine or 10 champion parents and I promise there are a whole lot of people behind that.”

Michael sees the parent champions as an important link between parents and the school. “Previously the interface between the school and the parents was a teacher. We still have that, but behind that we now have a parent champion. Those parents who may have been reluctant to engage with teachers are now seeing a parent champion, who is just like them.”

In October the Manurewa Parenting Hub and the school collaborated on a literacy evening, where parents (including a number of fathers) demonstrated literacy games and activities to other parents, and gave them the games and activities to take home with them. More than 70 families attended, all of whom rated the experience extremely highly.

“Once you have your parents on side you are working with a significantly different community and a different community spirit.”

For Michael, the evening was extremely satisfying. “Seeing the dads there was truly empowering, because it’s probably not his idea of a great night but he is there doing it for his whānau,” he says.

Janice believes that soon the school will be able to demonstrate increased results in teaching and learning. “The parents now know the journey, and they know how to support their children. They know what national standards mean. They better understand what partnership is all about, and we better understand from a school point of view what our parents need.”

Parents at the school agree that their involvement with the Hub is helping their children’s learning. “I know how to use the right skills to help with my child’s learning”, says one parent. “There are a lot of other things you learn, like the computer and (new ways of doing) maths.”

Another parent has seen changes in her children as well as herself. “I see myself changing quite dramatically”, she says. “I had self-esteem (issues), now I go out in the community and I meet other people.”

Janice also believes that the impacts can be felt beyond the school.

“Once you have your parents on side you are working with a significantly different community and a different community spirit,” says Janice.

Janice and Michael believe that true partnership with parents can occur only when the school and its staff are ready.

“There is such a philosophical basis to what we are doing and so much that underpins it,” says Michael. “There has to be a lot of investment from leadership.”

“You can’t do this without having the philosophical stuff in place, your staff on board,” says Janice. “You can’t say ‘right you need to run a parenting programme using your teaching skills’ because after a few weeks it will fail. Schools are busy places, busy enough without parenting programmes added on.”

It has been a long and somewhat arduous journey, but Janice and Michael wouldn’t change it for the world.

“What gives me a buzz is when it is making a difference for kids,” says Michael. “There is not a day when I don’t love coming to school.”

Janice agrees. “I have never been so emotional, so vulnerable and so attached,” she says. “My heart is bigger than it has ever been before.”

Maths Workshop – Manurewa Central School

Hub maths and literacy workshops aim to build parents’ confidence and skills to support their children’s confidence, learning and behaviour. By using fun and interactive games parents learn new skills and at the end of the workshop parents take these games home to play with their children. Key to the success of these workshops is how the school and the Hub work together to connect with parents.

An example of how this works successfully is the recent math workshop at Manurewa Central School in August 2013, which was attended by 51 parents.

Good communication between the Hub, the school and parents is critical to getting a good turnout, as is plenty of advertising and support from school staff. Two weeks prior to the workshop the Hub designed and emailed



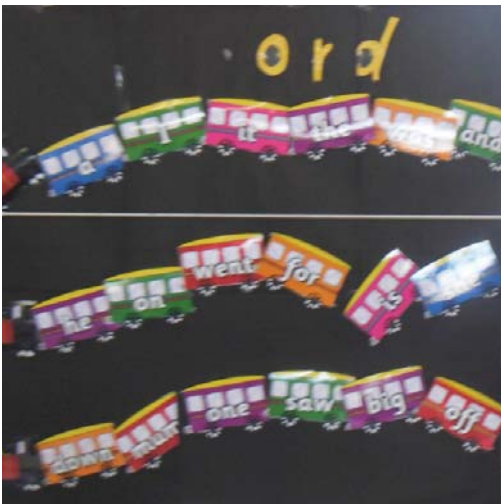
w o r t h

I am a teacher aide at Roscommon Primary.

This is my beautiful principal.

I make all the resources in our classroom.

There's heaps of stuff that teacher aides do.



a flyer to the Deputy Principal Janice Lindsay. The flyer included information about the workshop such as the time, date and venue, but most importantly it told parents what they would get out of the workshop –fun maths games to play with their kids at home.

Free packs containing the math games covered in the workshop are given out to parents, as the facilitators understand the value of parents having fun free resources to use with their kids and learning how to use them correctly.

In addition to the flyer, the deputy principal and the school staff took the initiative to promote and personally invite parents to come along. In the fortnight leading up to the workshop staff promoted it in the school newsletter, teachers personally invited parents at the parent/teacher interviews and there were flyers posted around the school where parents often congregate. All the children were reminded by their teachers and a second notice sent home with the children the day before.

These four ways of promoting the workshops appear to have highly influenced the turnout, as did the promise of give-aways.

On the day of the workshop, a serious atmosphere soon changed when the Hub staff and volunteers introduced themselves. Key to this change was an explanation they were not parenting experts, counsellors, teachers or social workers but parents themselves who wanted to support other parents to help their children learn and grow. By the time parents were in groups making the games and playing them together there was a real buzz in the room and people were cutting out games and sitting in groups playing them with each other. Some commented that they were unsure and other parents helped explain or replay a certain part of the game so others could feel more confident. The parent volunteers encouraged people to have a go and to ask questions.

The feedback from the children to their teachers and from some of the parents has been that they enjoyed playing the math games together at home. Some parents have contacted the Hub for additional parenting support and information about future workshops. One mother who is parenting on her own said she could see an improvement in her son's behaviour because of playing the games with him at home and she looked forward to accessing more activities to use together.

Takanini Teacher Aides

Becoming a teacher aide at their children's school has become a life-changing experience for a group of Takanini mums, all of whom are now working at their children's school and are currently studying towards a Teacher Aide Certificate at the Open Polytechnic. Some have also recently graduated from the Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT) Literacy and Numeracy Course.

At first, mums and teacher aides Aroha, Carly, Hana and Kim were hesitant to seek work outside the home, believing they were not qualified enough or hadn't done well enough themselves at school. Carly sums up the feelings of the group when she says: "I wasn't sure about being a teacher aide but I was willing to learn".

Seven months down the track, the mums are all seeing positive results for both themselves and their children. Not only are they able to pinpoint positive changes in their children's educational achievement, they also have a good understanding of their role in making these changes happen.

"It gave me back my skills because when my son started school he was really low in reading," says Aroha. "In the holidays I got him to read every day. He is now reading fantastically."

After she became a teacher aide, Carly felt that she was better equipped to help with

her children's learning. "I can help my kids at home more," she says. "Before, I was like 'go and read your book'. I knew I had to change that."

Hana agrees. "I was able to help my 12 year old because he was struggling at maths. I looked over at him and said 'I know how to do that' and I had never been able to do that before."

"It makes you step up as being the second educator," says Kim. "You don't just rely on the school to educate your child. You have got the tools now to do it yourself."

The Mum's felt that their children's learning outcomes had improved not only because they were working as teacher aides, but because their children knew and were familiar with the other teacher aides. Carly describes how her children have gone from reading well below national standards, to well above national standard in the space of eight months, which she believes is due to the teacher aide (her friend and colleague) in the classroom.

"My children are comfortable with who is helping them, so they push more and learn more," she says.

The benefits are not restricted to their children. All four mums described how becoming a teacher aide has helped their confidence and self-esteem, and had helped them see themselves differently.

"I am not as thick as I thought I was," says Hana. "I am actually taking in the information now like I didn't do at high school. I understand maths stuff now... it is a good feeling."

Some of the teacher aides struggled at school, which they believe places them in a good position to help many of the children in their class, partly because they understand what they are going through.

"We tell the kids we were like that," Aroha says. "We were too scared to put our hands up. We are trying to teach them, put your hand up and ask."

Hana showed her class a test she had she had completed at MIT. In her first attempt, Hana couldn't answer many of the questions, but she passed with her second attempt.

"They were like 'do you feel bummed?' I said, 'Yes, I was embarrassed but I didn't give up and look what I got,'" says Hana. "They were proud of what I had done."

The teacher aides appreciate the camaraderie and support they get as being part of a group. They particularly appreciate the coordination, administrative help and support that they get from the Hub. For the mums, having outside coordination is almost akin to having a supervisor, particularly when they are concerned about children they are working with.

"We shouldn't underestimate the importance of having one person to go to," Kim says. "Having someone not really connected to the school is like having an outside looking into the situation."

"With the Hub we have the support, and it makes a huge difference," says Aroha.

Carly agrees. "There is one co-ordination point and a place you can go for questions. It is great having that support and knowing

It gave me back my skills because when my son started school he was really low in reading. In the holidays I got him to read every day. He is now reading fantastically."

that (Hub staff) are going to help us plays a big part.”

For the moment, the mums are happy to continue as Teacher Aides, but they have ambitions for the future.

“We all want to do different jobs”, says Aroha. “I would like to have my own class, for kids with behavioural issues who struggle in mainstream.”

They are proud of their achievements, and it means a lot to the mums that their children are also very proud of them.

“My son was really proud when we received our MIT certificates,” says Hana. “Our kids were all there and it was a good feeling. It was the first time for us girls that we got a piece of paper that said we were qualified in something, and our kids were there to witness it.”

“What makes it (great) is when your children look at you and they are proud of you,” says Kim.

Overall Impact

Whilst the impact profile allow us to see the impact on individual parents and schools, focus groups and interviews with parents and school principals indicate that the Hub is having an impact well beyond these individuals.

Impact on Parents

Feedback from parents would suggest that parents who actively participate in Hub activities (e.g. “HubSTARS”) are experiencing, or have experienced, significant personal impact in terms of parenting skills, an increase in self-esteem and self-confidence and growth in personal relationships and self-efficacy. Impacts for families and whānau include parents feeling better equipped to parent their children, improved practical skills and a better understanding of

community services and support available to help families. Parents feel more confident in supporting their children’s learning, and there is some anecdotal evidence from both schools and parents that this is translating into better learning outcomes for children.

Parenting

Parents who participated in the focus groups, interviews and Photovoice project all agreed that their involvement in the Hub had made a difference – in some cases a transformational difference – to their parenting. Many of the parents had been parenting in isolation, and it was a relief to know that others in their community were facing the kinds of issues.

We found we were not the only parents having the problems in our lives with our children. We found out we were normal and that other people were having the same problems.

Parent (focus group)

Others found support and a listening ear.

Parenting is hard. It is ongoing and it is tiresome. When you are actively trying to be a positive parent every hour of the day it is draining. But here you feel like you have back up and support. I have actually found I have been given more support from the staff at the Hub than I have my own family.

Parent (focus group)

What most parents appreciated was the support they received from other parents. They perceived this support to be non-judgemental, particularly if things weren’t going so well at home, and felt that they could open up to other parents in a safe environment.

You tip toe around teachers a little bit in case they judge you. I would probably hold a lot in if I was talking to a teacher. The Hub... are really there to help you.

Parent (focus group)

They are on your side. They encourage you

instead of judging you. No one is better than the other person.

Parent (focus group)

All participants who had attended at least one practical session on parenting found them informative, and found the strategies and tips that were covered useful. As a result of participating in parenting sessions, many parents felt they better understood their parenting style and were better equipped to deal with parenting challenges as they arose.

My step daughters have come to live with us. I didn't know I was going to raise three teenagers. I learned about puberty, but also about bonding with them and trying to take on that motherly role when I am not even their mother.

Parent (focus group)

I thought I was quite a hard parent. I picked up different techniques and tried something different, not having to be a sergeant major all the time.

Parent (focus group)

Community Connection

The Hub actively encourages community connections through its events, sessions, and drop in centre. Mothers in one partner school have formed a netball team.

Nearly all parents talked about the positive impact of community connections on reducing their sense of isolation and increasing their sense of confidence and self-esteem.

"I see myself changing quite dramatically. I had self-esteem (issues), now I go out in the community and I meet other people."

Parent (focus group)

Several school Principals and Deputy Principals have noticed changes in their parents and families, particularly with regards to their growing confidence. They believe that growing the skills and abilities

of the parents has enabled them to feel more confident and "hold their heads up higher." One Deputy Principal noted that involvement with the Hub was most helpful for particularly vulnerable families:

... a lot of people are coming out of fearful situations and they need to have their hands held for a while... I have seen some families grow from very humble beginnings with the Hub; we have some very key families where things have really sprouted for them, they have grown and flourished.

Deputy Principal (School 1)

One parent involved in a local church had borrowed parenting resources from the Hub and shared them with others, thus spreading the positive parenting messages into other areas of the community.

Learning and engagement

Participation in Hub activities had enabled parents to not only learn practical skills to support their children's learning; they also had a better understanding of how their children learned. These parents had learned to have patience with their children's learning, particularly when they were learning to read or when they were struggling with learning, and they also understood that different children learn at a different pace, and to adjust their approach as a result.

One parent involved in a local church had borrowed parenting resources from the Hub and shared them with others, thus spreading the positive parenting messages into other areas of the community.

h e l p

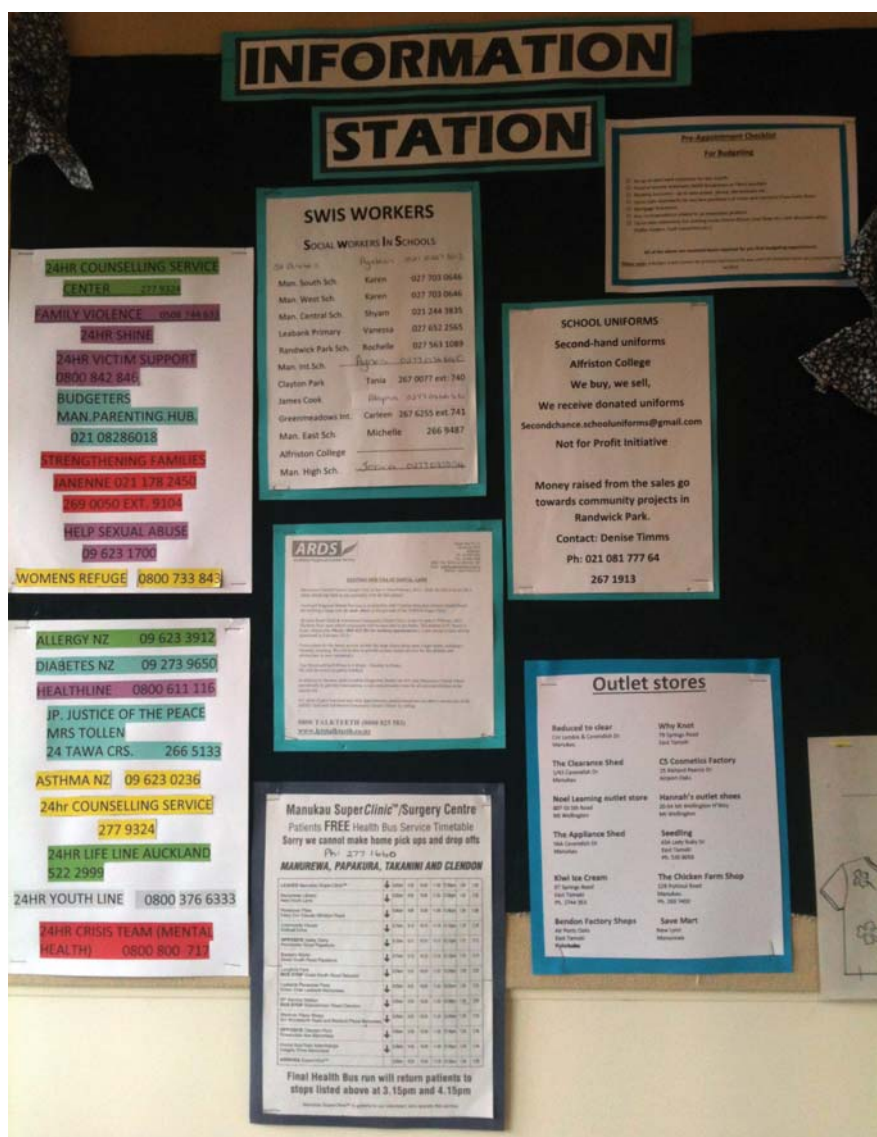
You have to give,
to get something
back.

The Hub taught
me that you can
still charge on
with life even
though you have
things going on.

It's alright to be
scared. You can
overcome your
patterns.

I've had a tough
journey and life is
not always happy,
but I know that I
can always come
to the Hub.

At the Hub, there
is always someone
to talk to.



If the school is not engaging parents, somebody has to. I think together we can do that. I think if we focus on what we are good at which is teaching students, then one of the roles of the Hub is to engage parents in that learning as well. It is one less thing that we as a school have to do.

Principal (School 2)

In addition to feeling more engaged with their children's learning, many of the parents talked about feeling more engaged with the school.

The teachers see us around the school more.

We get along with the teachers as well, so when the teachers need help we step in.

Parent (focus group)

One Principal believed that this engagement not only help parents better understand what was required from their children, but helped the school understand how to better support and engage parents.

The parents now know the journey; they know how to support their children. They know what national standards mean. They better understand what partnership is all about and we better understand from a school point of view what our parents need.

It is about a true collective, joined together and not without one or the other.

School Principal (School 3)

Impact on Schools

All Principals and Deputy Principals interviewed were extremely supportive of the Hub and the work it did in their schools.

The Hub is incredibly successful. There is no doubt about that. It is unique.

Principal (School 1)

I am firm believer and I love the idea of the Hub.

Deputy Principal (School 1)

I really love that the Hub is here. I really love the

idea of engaging parents.

Principal (School 2)

It is like our school is now totally different.

Principal (School 3)

Schools report that the Hub has helped them better engage with their parents and community, or to engage in different ways, whilst at the same time allowing them to continue to focus on teaching and learning.

It is our responsibility to be part of the community and help but I can't have my teachers teaching parents how to cook because that is not what the Ministry of Education want... They just want to see the reading and the maths.

Principal (School 1)

One of the outcomes of greater parental engagement is that parents are now more likely to ask questions of their children's teachers and their school.

What you see now are parents who are standing up asking some tough questions about their children's learning and so they should. We have parents coming in and saying 'so what is the school going to do about it', and so they should.

Principal (School 3)

Impact on Student Achievement

Whilst the evaluation did not specifically set out to document impact on children's learning

outcomes, interviews with Principals suggest that Hub support of and engagement with families may be helping to raise individual student achievement.

The bigger picture for us around raising student achievement is having parents on board. If we are not engaging parents then our job is twice as hard.

Principal (School 2)

Schools acknowledge, however, that establishing a causal relationship between parent engagement and support and individual student achievement is tricky.

(We know this has) benefits for the students but it is very innovative and it is very new thing for schools to do and it is very hard to prove.

Deputy Principal (School 1)

What Principals do know, however, is that outcomes for students could be far worse if there were no Hub at their school.

I don't think the outcome for kids would be nearly as good. The impact of a kid being badly hurt at home or not being fed or all of those social issues that come into it, they have got to have an impact on kids learning.

Principal (School 3)

Teacher Aides

Participants in the Teacher Aide programme report similarly positive personal and familial impacts as parents, indeed, many teacher aides were involved with Hub activities prior to applying for their teacher aide position.

Teacher aides who were part of this evaluation reported a number of extrinsic and intrinsic benefits, including:

- Improved learning outcomes for their own children;
- Understanding themselves as a learner, and improving their own education;
- Learning new skills and personal qualities

such as patience and persistence;

- Increased family incomes;
- Personal fulfilment from helping children strive for success;
- A belief they were more likely to find further employment, particularly with having recent work experience ;
- Increased self-esteem;
- Satisfaction of doing something positive for their family; and
- Role-modelling positive behaviour for their children as well as for their wider family and whānau.

Internal evaluation processes

One of the questions Hub staff continually ask each other, and the parents and schools they work with is “how do we know we are making a difference?” This one simple question ensures that internal evaluation is an ongoing process. Data is gathered through informal mechanisms, such as conversation or email, or through formal mechanisms such as surveys or feedback forms. As already stated, parents have myriad opportunities to feed ideas into the Hub (and to action those ideas), however staff also regularly reach out to parents who aren’t regular visitors to the Hub such as hosting breakfasts at partner schools or having a coffee cart at the school gates. Often, staff will take empty cups with different activity ideas and playing counters along to events like these and ask parents to put a playing counter in the cup with the activity idea they are most interested in, thus gauging demand for activities and helping to tailor activities to suit parent’s needs.



Critical Success Factors

Interviews with schools and parents make it clear that the most critical success factor for the Hub throughout all its stages of development has been that of relational leadership.

Relational Leadership

Relational leadership is defined as a process of bringing people together to accomplish change and make a difference to benefit the common good. This approach to leadership focusses on five primary components. First, it is purposeful and builds commitment towards positive purposes. Second, it is inclusive of people and diversity. Third, it empowers others and values their contribution. Fourth, it is ethical and values-driven. Lastly, it is highly process-oriented (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2009).

Relational leadership was key to the success of establishing the Hub in the early stages and the understanding of the importance of relationships characterises ways in which the Hub now works.

What got me was the leadership, the quality of the person, the plan and the scheme, the dream and the ability to carry it out...

School Principal 1

The relational leadership approach was intentional from the start-up phase of the Hub. Relationships between the Hub and schools were developed and trust was built. Relationships were built with parents and a practice model was implemented which supported parents to become leaders of their families.

Trust underpins the Hub's relational

leadership. Principals demonstrate their trust on an ongoing basis by allowing the Hub to develop its own programmes, in its own way. They trust that what the Hub offers is inclusive and centred on the needs of the parents and children in the school's community.

Parents trust that they can come to the Hub and they will be treated fairly and will not be judged. Parents trust that help will be given when they need it.

I've had a tough journey and life is not always happy, but I know that I can always come to the Hub.

Parent (Photovoice)

The Hub has embodied each of the five components of relational leadership in the following ways:

Vision

The Hub holds tight to its vision of "a community free of violence where families have a strong sense of belonging, feel valued and supported by coming together to build skills and confidence to take their families forward," and purposefully builds commitment at all levels of the community towards this shared common good. Anyone who takes part in Hub activities, be they schools, parents, agencies or other community members, becomes part of the shared vision which focuses on the safety and positive growth of children and their families and whānau.

The vision of the Hub centres on enabling informal social support and growing personal agency, thereby supporting parents meet their own personal and family needs in everyday situations as well as under crisis conditions.

For the Hub, one of the benefits of holding tight to the vision is that it can be very clear about what it isn't. The Hub isn't a social work intervention or a counselling service, and strong relationships have therefore been built with school social workers and community agencies who can fill these roles, which avoids duplication and dilution of services. Moreover, the vision of the Hub centres on enabling informal social support and growing personal agency, thereby supporting parents meet their own personal and family needs in everyday situations as well as under crisis conditions, rather than creating dependency on social services.

Inclusiveness

Difference and diversity are valued. All-comers are treated fairly and equally, and it is a core Hub belief that every individual can make a positive difference for themselves or others. Through the Hub, schools and communities are encouraged to engage with and learn from each other in different ways. Principals of partner schools say their schools have become more inclusive of parents and whānau and are now better-equipped to listen to, understand and respond to parents' needs.

Empowering

The Hub empowers the growth and development of individuals by soliciting and valuing their contributions and sharing information and decision-making. In doing so, individuals have the opportunity to develop their skills and talents, and develop character through contribution and participation.

Great lengths are taken to ensure that parents lead the direction that the Hub is going to take.

This is done through the parent-led Board, by regularly formally and informally consulting parents, by appointing staff members who are also local parents, and by developing and nurturing 'parent champions' in the schools. School principals see these parent champions as key to the future success of the Hub.

Many parents say that they can contribute ideas to the Hub and that these ideas will be acted on when they are in line with the vision.

Our ideas are always heard. If we say an idea we are all able to expand from there.

Parent (focus group)

The focus on diversity, inclusiveness and parent's needs allows the Hub to offer support in ways which are non-threatening. Examples of this are sessions on family law and the "Return to the Workforce" programme which have been offered in response to parents requests and were therefore perceived to be non-threatening in ways which the same programmes offered by government providers might have been perceived.

Ethical

Hub staff and HubSTARS encourage ethical practice by modelling, encouraging and engaging in socially responsible behaviour. Not only are the Hub values displayed prominently, behaviour such as 'pay it forward' is actively encouraged:

We talk about 'paying it forward'. You do something good for somebody and they do something good for someone else and hopefully there is a ripple effect that happens.

Principal, School 2



g o a l s

My goal as a Hubstar is to be fit.

I would like to be able to lose more weight.

I have already lost over 45kg but I am still willing to do more fitness and walk as much as I can to stay fit, help me with my weight and also my self esteem to stay confident with myself

As examples of 'pay it forward', a load of 100 donated pumpkins and a sack of onions were turned into soup and shared around the community, and cheese scones are frequently delivered to busy teachers in the partner schools.

Process-oriented

There is much evidence to suggest that strong, connected communities experience fewer social problems and, when they do face difficulties, have more resources to draw upon. Encouraging community connectedness can increase social tolerance and a respect for others and encourage social solidarity and a willingness to help others (Forrest & Kearns, 2001).

Much of the work the Hub does is centred on "activities", such as sessions, workshops and events. High-quality effort and contribution is encouraged during these sessions, and participants are given opportunities to collaborate, reflect and make meaning of the activity whilst it is occurring. Whilst these processes have immediate outcomes, however, such as learning to cook something new or understanding what conscious parenting means, it is during the process of the activity that community connections and new community ties are formed. Opportunities are intentionally created during this process for parents, grandparents and other whānau to talk about what is happening in their lives, and to seek informal support if they need to.

The process-oriented nature of the Hub therefore masks a far greater and longer-term goal, which is creating sustainable, long-term community ties.

Children at the centre

Children are at the centre of all that the Hub offers. Whilst programmes and sessions are mostly offered for parents and caregivers, the outcomes of programme participation are always aimed at improving things for children.

"They are (always) thinking about how the things they offer are going to benefit the kids. They are thinking what the outcomes will be for the kids if the parents come along."

Principal (School 2)

Children, particularly pre-schoolers, are always welcome at the Hub drop-in centre, and after-hours events (e.g. literacy evenings, celebrations) are always set up to cater for families. At one literacy evening, for example, a BBQ was set up to cook hamburgers and sausages, and a movie was shown in a classroom for younger and older siblings of the Year 1-6 children who were participating in the evening.

School support

The support of school principals and school staff in the partner schools has been critical to the development of the Hub. Schools offer the Hub the use of school facilities at no charge, and promote Hub activities in their newsletters. Some schools have a dedicated "Hub Corner" in the newsletter where Hub activities are advertised. School principals give freely of their time to Hub business, and champion Hub activities with the rest of the school staff and parents. School principals do not begrudge the support they give to the Hub.

During activities community connections and new community ties are formed. Opportunities are intentionally created during this process for parents, grandparents and other whānau to talk about what is happening in their lives, and to seek informal support if they need to.

It doesn't require a lot... There are times when there may be facilities or resources that the Hub wants to use, but because I am all about engaging parents it is not an issue.

Principal (School 2)

Community credibility

Over time, the Hub has built significant credibility in the Manurewa community, which is evidenced by the number of referrals received from organisations such as Citizens Advice, CYF and non-partner schools. The Hub philosophy is 'to complement but not compete' with other agencies, and they have invested considerable time building trusted relationships with local agencies, other NGOs and community groups in the area, and encourage parents to avail themselves of the wide range of community services in Manurewa.

Ongoing quality development

Whilst engaging a steady number of parents is an important measure for the Hub, considerable time and discussion goes into ensuring that parent engagement is focussed on quality, rather than quantity. Rather than asking themselves "How much did we do?" Hub staff are more likely to ask "How well did we do it?"

We talk about a real shared understanding of what it is to do it together, and it is about the school stepping down and handing over and empowering other people.

School Principal 3

Ongoing evaluation such as this allows the Hub to focus on ways of continuously improving and supporting development and innovation.

Financial accountability

Accountability to funders (financial accountability) is of paramount importance to the Hub. Financial accountability rests not only with the Hub staff, but is also emphasised to parents and users of Hub resources and services. Staff and parents are encouraged to find the most low-cost ways of doing things, and all decisions take financial accountability into consideration:

At the beginning I talked about the fact that we are using [funders] money and if the [funders] walk through the door we have to be able to justify why we are running the session the way we are.

Hub Manager

Schools need to be philosophically ready

All three school Principals spoken to agreed that schools needed to be 'philosophically ready' to engage and connect with parents. Both staff and school leaders need to understand the value of engaging parents, and be willing to participate or at least support the process. In addition to understanding the value, schools need to be prepared for the engagement to be partially, fully or eventually community-led, rather than school-led.

We talk about a real shared understanding of what it is to do it together, and it is about the school stepping down and handing over and empowering other people.

School Principal 3

Perseverance

Parent and whānau participation in the Hub and Hub activities has grown slowly over the past five years. Engagement with parents didn't happen overnight, and has required much perseverance by both the schools and the Hub.

Communities in this particular area are a tough area to get anyone involved in because they wipe their hands of the school.

Principal (School 2)

I used to say we only need one person to come because behind them there is a whole wedge, a whole whānau

Principal (School 3)

It has also taken some time, particularly in two of the schools, to get staff to support the idea. The Principals continue to persevere, however, by providing leadership around school involvement.

...unfortunately we have a couple of staff members who have other ideas about the Hub and what they should be doing. It is really about building a bridge to getting them on board.

Principal (School 2)

The Drop in Centre / Technology Room at Manurewa South School (Photo courtesy of Manurewa Parenting Hub)





Challenges

A constant challenge for schools and Hub staff is recruiting 'new' faces. Overall, despite numerous flyers, a website, newsletters and leaflets, word of mouth appears to be the most successful recruitment tool.

Recruitment and reach

Support and endorsement of Hub activities from teaching staff is also an important feature of recruitment and reach – a recent maths workshop attracted four times the typical number of parents after teachers promoted the workshop during parent-teacher interviews.

Introductory events are held frequently, and plans are underway in one school to take groups of parents to the Hub when their four year olds come for their school visits. Two schools are also beginning to partner more often with the Hub on learning events, such as literacy evenings and reading together programmes.

The Hub faces many recruitment challenges. Parents spoken with who were initially reluctant to engage with the Hub indicated that shyness, language barriers, and low self-esteem were all significant barriers. There are additional practical barriers, such as transport (or finding money for public transport) or work commitments.

In addition to these barriers, many of those spoken with indicated that there are a number of families in their community who have more pressing issues to deal with than engagement with their child's school or their child's learning. School principals also struggle with this, and accept this is part of the

reality of working in Manurewa. They believe that parents who don't get more involved with the Hub is a reflection of the realities of these parents, rather than a reflection of the services offered by the Hub.

The parents that we are not engaging with I think are ones that have got bigger issues. It is not like they don't want to be part of their child's learning; it is just that their issues are a lot bigger.

Principal (School 2)

I think getting them to get out of their comfort zones really is the challenge...They don't want some of us to know what really goes on in their lives.

Hub Staff (Parent Liaison)

The Hub faces this challenge by putting considerable resource into organisational development to address recruitment and develop engagement strategies which can support them to engage a variety of families or help them find ways of overcoming barriers to participation. As an example, Hub staff are currently working on a process called 'user design thinking', which is about developing engagement strategies based on specific needs within their community.

Growth and Development

The Hub has grown quickly over five years. During this period the Hub has dealt with many challenges typical of organisations during their start-up and consolidation phases, such as: establishing credibility; recruiting volunteers and developing resources; networking with other groups and agencies; setting up organisational processes and procedures; adapting to shared decision-making; employing staff; separating management from governance and developing teams with different responsibilities.

The Hub has now moved well beyond the start-up phase where the founder holds the vision to a stage where, as evidence from this evaluation shows, many people in the community now hold the vision and feel some responsibility towards achieving it. Whilst organisations in this stage of development are far better equipped to deal with the types of challenges they faced early on, they do face increasingly complex developmental issues around innovation, change and intent.

Evidence from this evaluation suggests that current and future challenges related to the growth and development of the Hub may include:

- Finding ways to retain organisational learning and memory around principles of practice e.g. the importance placed on relational leadership.
- Strengthening strategic capability within the board, particularly around strategic development and fiscal responsibility.
- Extending the reputation and scope of the organisation within the community whilst maintaining integrity of purpose and action.
- Managing the balance between short term actions and long term vision.

- Firmly encouraging staff to take collective responsibility for improvement and integrity of any work undertaken in the Hub name.
- Paying attention to the changing needs of the community.
- Developing strong internal and external links.
- Helping staff understand how their work contributes to the strategic vision and encouraging them to apply their practical knowledge and experience to creating change.
- Linking with others doing similar work to share learning and experience and contribute to the development of a wider societal understanding of the benefits of engaging and supporting parents through schools.

The key to maintaining growth and facing the complex challenges posed by development is to ensure the vision of the organisation is both resourced and valued. All levels of the organisation (e.g. staff, board, volunteers) need to understand what needs to be done, and how to do it well. In doing so, the Hub may well protect itself against future risks and challenges and ensure a greater chance of sustainability.

Resourcing and funding

The Hub depends on outside funding in order to provide activities, events and resources for parents and schools free-of-charge. Whilst partner schools assist where they can with resources and support, school budgets do not allow for the funding of comprehensive engagement activities of the type undertaken by the Hub.

This funding is often sporadic, and only ever short- to medium-term. One of the challenges for the Hub has been finding funders who are deeply committed to community growth and

development and who are willing to partner with the Hub in the long term. Funding such as this will enable the Hub leadership to focus less on finding funding, and more on leading practice and planning for the long-term.

The thing for me is the insecurity of funding and I think for this to grow and be really successful someone needs to say "here is five years money." You can grow and you are here for another year but after that we don't know what is happening.

Board Member

Sourcing long-term funding is a constant challenge. It's difficult to retain quality staff, and focus on the future, when you are constantly worrying where funding for the next six months is coming from.

Hub Manager

Momentum

In one school, partnership with the Hub has enabled the school to fast-track its parent engagement. Things have moved very fast and the school has faced minor issues with resources and staffing.

Things are rolling, and rolling really fast. We have run out of venues. But these are good problems to have...

Principal (School 3)



HubSTARS (Photo courtesy of Manurewa Parenting Hub)



Conclusion

The Manurewa Parenting Hub a parent-led community-based initiative which promotes positive parenting, supports vulnerable families in the Manurewa area, responds to the parenting and support needs of the local population as they arise, and proactively supports local parents to engage with their children's learning on an ongoing basis.

The purpose of this evaluation was to outline the history and approach of the Hub and examine the impacts and outcomes of parental involvement in the parenting Hub on families and children.

This report will be updated in early 2014 with the initial results from a longitudinal study designed to track the process, change and challenges for parents who have been involved in the Hub and who have gone on to employment as teacher aides.

Overall, the Manurewa Parenting Hub appears to have contributed towards positive outcomes for parents and children in the Manurewa community, particularly among the six partner schools. Feedback from parents would suggest that they have experienced significant personal impact in terms of parenting skills, an increase in self-esteem and self-confidence and growth in personal relationships and self-efficacy. Moreover, impacts for families and whānau include parents feeling better equipped to parent their children, improved practical skills and a better understanding of community services and support available to help families. Parents feel more confident in supporting their children's learning, and there is some anecdotal evidence from both schools and parents that this is translating into better learning outcomes for children.

Schools report that the Hub has helped them better engage with their parents and community, or to engage in different ways, whilst at the same time allowing them to continue to focus on teaching and learning. In addition, interviews with Principals suggest that Hub support of and engagement with families may be helping to raise individual student achievement.

Relational leadership, placing children at the centre, support from schools, community credibility and ongoing quality development appear to be the key critical factors for success of the Hub approach.

Challenges facing the Hub include continuing to expand recruitment and reach, developmental challenges innovation, change and intent and ongoing resourcing and funding.

It is hoped that this report may influence practice within schools and communities by sharing the knowledge generated by this research.



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