

CASE STUDY:

Literacy and language

Lifting achievement levels

Literacy and language skills are the foundation of a child's education and The University of Auckland's Faculty of Education at Auckland University is doing ground-breaking work in this area.

"We are dealing with big themes here, with child literacy and language, particularly children from multi-lingual and diverse urban communities," says Professor Stuart McNaughton, director of the University of Auckland's Woolf Fisher Research Centre.

The Centre was established in 1998 with a primary research focus on education and schooling success through evidence-based research and collaborations with schools, early childhood centres and the wider community.

"Since then, we have worked with more than 10,000 children and more than 50 schools to develop, test, refine and grow programmes aimed at raising achievement levels."

Both the faculty and the centre have extensive experience with bilingual/biliteracy children.

"Classrooms and communities everywhere are becoming increasingly culturally diverse, so policy makers and education providers need to know what best meets diverse learning needs. We now know that areas such as retention of culture and culturally accurate and relevant education materials are increasingly important," says Professor McNaughton.

The work on instructional design in literacy focuses on reading comprehension, and writing development (ages 9-13); the links between reading and writing, and sustainability of effective instruction.

Professor McNaughton says schools must be shown how to sustain their capability so that they can continue to develop without relying on faculty or centre support.

"The New Zealand West Coast literacy project is a prime example of sustainability. We worked with 33 schools on a customised programme and provided both online and learning

The logo for niServices, featuring a blue shield icon to the left of the text "niServices".

Auckland UniServices Limited



THE UNIVERSITY
OF AUCKLAND

NEW ZEALAND

Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau

community platforms for teachers so they could continue to deliver the results from the original project."

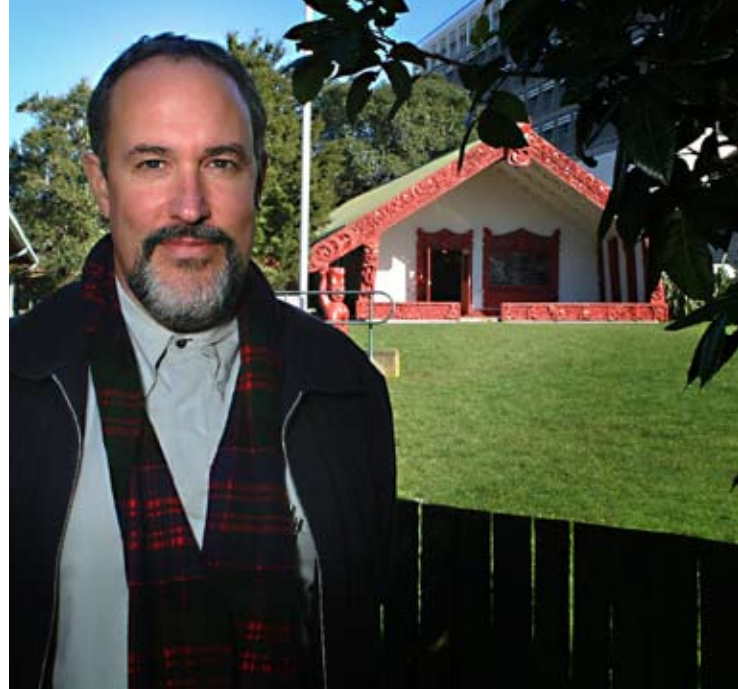
As the team researches more deeply, new needs emerge. For example, there is no research on the growth of a children's vocabulary from the time they enter school, or the *summer learning* effect, where children leave the classroom for up to eight weeks, producing a measurable and detrimental effect on their rate of progress.

Professor McNaughton believes the way they approach educational instruction sets them apart from others.

"We design collaborative research and development work using processes of evidence-based inquiring and problem solving. We add our theoretical and research-based expertise to teachers' professional expertise. Our work is scalable, so it can be extended to more schools and adapted for international use. We both design and test our models in the classroom and we have assessment materials in a range of community languages."

"We are dealing with big themes here, with child literacy and language, particularly children from multi-lingual and diverse urban communities."

Literacy and language skills are the foundation of a child's education



Professor Stuart McNaughton

Professor McNaughton is Director of the Woolf Fisher Research Centre at The University of Auckland. His research interests are literacy and language development, the design of effective educational programmes for culturally and linguistically diverse populations and cultural processes in development. His work includes research on family literacy practices and interventions in early childhood settings and schools including research partnerships with school clusters. He has chaired national groups providing advice to the New Zealand Government on literacy goals and has contributed to the development of national educational assessments and resources. He consults on curricula and programmes nationally and internationally.

UniServices

Auckland UniServices Limited is a wholly owned company of The University of Auckland. Established in 1988, UniServices manages all the University's commercial research and consultancy partnerships, forms new business ventures based on University research, and owns and develops the University's intellectual property estate.

Its mission is to apply the University's research and expertise to client needs and business opportunities, enabling organisations based on new knowledge to grow, expand the University's research capability and benefit the broader community.

contact

Sandie Gusscott
Senior Business Manager, Arts & Education
UniServices

Postal address

c/o The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142
New Zealand

Street address

Level 10, UniServices House
70 Symonds Street, Auckland

T +64 9 373 7522 ext 89469

E s.gusscott@auckland.ac.nz

www.uniservices.co.nz



The challenges

- Research and development requires a long-term commitment
- New Zealand's low investment in research and development limits capacity to enhance educational outcomes
- Sustainability within schools

Delivery

- School-based projects working with teachers, students and the community
- Customised solutions according to needs as varied as geography and multiculturalism
- Quantitative and qualitative methodology
- Programmes that target children at key educational development points

Benefits

- We lift achievement levels in poor, urban schools to those of the mainstream
- Research-based solutions help inform our theoretical understanding of what constitutes effective instruction
- We develop schools and teachers as highly informed problem solvers
- We are growing researchers able to engage in research and development-based projects with schools