

LITERACY 2008

Linwood identified through its testing more students who needed remedial reading than it was able to fund teacher aides for. This placed the organizer Judy Hutchison in the unenviable position of selecting who was helped and who missed out.

TOE BY TOE AT LINWOOD 2008

At the beginning of the year there were 62 Year 9 students below 77 on a BURT word recognition. These are identified as needing remedial reading assistance ie Toe by Toe. Another 11 students scored between 77 and 80.

There were spaces for only 24 Year 9 students at the start of the year.

There were 7 Year 10 students and 16 Seniors, some finishing from the previous year but some were new to the school.

We had two tutors for the programme. Both tutors elected to work with 4 students per hour to allow more students to be tutored.

The Seniors and new Year 10 students were picked up by Terry Elliott with Year 9 students to fill in any spare spaces she had as they became available. I took on 16 Year 9 students as one period a day (or one day per week) was set aside for developing and supporting the outposts.

This meant 38 Year 9s with serious to moderate reading delays were not able to be seen from the start of the year and any new students of any age who arrived with reading delays would probably not be seen.

The school was able to find a further 10 hours per week during the year and some of the Year 9s were picked up then. However some of the Year 9s had left the school before even getting on to the programme (some for behavioural reasons and some because of transience). No doubt they will appear in the statistics at some later date.

Results continue to be good. One Senior girl who began the programme last year finished this year with a Probe 8.5 years better than her first in early 2007. Her BURT had increased by 52 raw score points. Another improved by 4.5 years. Most of the Year 9s will finish by the end of this term. All show improvements so far. One young man in Year 9 has had to be cajoled and coerced through the programme but at page 153 he finally admitted it has made a big difference to his reading and was able to acknowledge that he could now easily manage pages that he once found very difficult. Attendance continues to be a challenge for some students but it is not as serious a problem as it seems to be at the YMCA and Te Ora Hou.

OUTPOST TOE BY TOE

The outposts doing Toe by Toe are a very different proposition to in-school tutoring. Attendance is a perennial problem and so is fitting in around the programmes within the various institutions.

Paparua Prison Youth Unit

Jacque Gibson was appointed to the position at the end of Term 2. It took 6 weeks for her security clearance to come through and then another week and a half before they could fit us in for the induction course. Over this period of time Jacque had a very thorough training in the use of Toe by Toe at Linwood College. We both now have belts on which

we hang our security alarm and two way radio and a pouch for keys. I have not yet been issued with a clear plastic case to take material in and out of the prison but Jacquie does have one. Some of the security systems seem to depend more on who is at the desk than anything else. We are still endeavouring to get the library books we want to give them admitted and we have now been told that security passes with photo ID are no longer available for itinerant staff at the prison, so we both need to carry photo identity at all times. Staff within the youth unit have been helpful even though working with the students one on one means they often have to be individually brought out of their cells by guards and returned to their cells after the session which does make additional work for the prison guards.

Jacquie has assessed and started work with 6 students. She is fast tracking them through the beginning of the book and so far only one student has a serious learning disability. He is experiencing considerable difficulty differentiating between the short 'i' and 'e' sounds but can hear and recognise the consonant blends quite well. He is on some form of medication and this affects his ability to concentrate. However he is quite keen to do the programme and remains focussed during the session.

Initial testing here showed a range of BURT word score results from 45-75 and the Probes ranged from 7.5 years to 11.5 years. All the students are making good progress through the book – 3 students have reached and completed pages in the 90s which is about 1/3rd of the way through the book, 2 are in the 80s and one is at 59.

There is no problem with attendance here but the students can be locked down and not let out if there are any incidents in the area. This has happened once so far.

Jacquie has already had an enquiry from a student wanting to know if he can finish the programme when he gets out of prison. This is a very positive sign and all the prisoners seem to think that the programme will help them.

Te Ora Hou

Unexpectedly there have been more students available for Toe by Toe from Whakatu than from TKW – 4 now and only 2 from TKW, although a new student has just started.

Whakatu students were funded by Corrections Dept and TKW from Dept of Education – which in effect meant Corrections-funded students had more money. The groups are now being merged.

The programmes were working more to keep young people busy and off the streets. However the emphasis has changed and the programme is now designed to act as a bridge from school to work. The primary purpose is to move towards the future not to entertain. They want to tailor the programme to the students' needs and have them do practical things like get a driving license. Physically the students are together – not some doing lessons and others out doing adventure education. Potentially Toe by Toe can fit well into the new structure.

In Term 2 when Waveney arrived she felt as if she was starting on the back foot – nothing was really ready for her –and the programme was not set up for her to fit in. She felt the staff had not really been brought on board and that her job was not seen to be part of their system, so that staff were not communicating and not prioritising the time for Toe by Toe. Paul stepped in and was very supportive and helpful at getting this happening.

Term 3 Waveney felt was a great contrast. Paul was driving the process and he set up review meetings where they looked at the positives and negatives and a real effort was

made to get it going in a useful direction for students. Incentive was provided by TKW for attendance -a chart which students tick off- and students earn rewards like free go-karting.

One student is seen by other teachers as very slow but he is Waveney's best student. He volunteers positive feedback like "my girlfriend has noticed that my texting is getting better." One who stole something and was too embarrassed to return has been encouraged back by Waveney offering to do road code study with him first, but now he chooses to do Toe by Toe first. Students are becoming vulnerable and trusting enough to try and take the risk of getting it wrong. The non-reader Shaun has a long history of learning difficulties and has not been able to work on Toe by Toe because he cannot remember any patterns long term. Waveney has been doing toilet signs with him and he can now recognise some of them; in fact – said 'I read a sign on a toilet door' and was really happy about this. One student who shows great understanding told Waveney that her job was really easy, and insightfully commented that a lot of the sentences they were reading in the book were silly or did not make sense. None of the seven continuing students have reached halfway yet so we have not been able to assess their progress with Burt or Probe.

Linwood Avenue School

After discussion with the Principal, Waveney has just taken up working at Linwood Avenue School in the afternoons. They are providing 4 students initially. The Principal feels that transient students who start at the school after a large number of previous primary schools are the ones that have missed out on a good decoding system; they have had insufficient phonics and would benefit from a decoding programme whereas their own long term students are competent decoders but have more problems with comprehension. It will be interesting to see if intervention before High School will help prevent some of the more entrenched decoding problems we have experienced here at Linwood College.

YMCA

At the YMCA there have been 17 students on the database. Of these 8 have not yet reached halfway, 2 have just started and the remainder range between 11 and 65 sessions. Five have left the YMCA and had between 2 and 16 sessions; attendance for them was a problem from the start.

Two have finished – one did a very short version mainly to reassure himself his reading was adequate and he went from a 90 to 100 on the BURT and from 14 to 14.5 years on the Probe. The other student was working to increase her confidence and comprehension and went from 9.5 to 11 years on the Probe. We also built in a little comprehension work to support the Toe by Toe programme.

Two are halfway and have moved from 63 to 79 and from 76 to 85 on the Burt; and from 10 to 10.5 years and 10.5-11.5 respectively on the Probe.

The students who have stuck with the programme are positive about its usefulness. Despite initial reservations one student said he was now convinced it was working.

Julie Allce is a very patient teacher and has developed systems which allow these older students to self-manage the programme to some extent. She allows them to choose the order in which they tackle the days pages and she uses the whiteboard to get them writing as well as reading the words to support their learning.

Conclusion - Progress is slow but steady. Motivation and attendance seem to be the key to student success at this level.

Judy Hutchison