Family Literacy in Manukau City

First Formative and Process Evaluation Report

For City of Manukau Educational Trust (COMET)
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Evaluation of the Manukau Family Literacy project

Evaluation is generally categorised into three broad types – formative, process and summative. *Formative evaluation* is essentially about providing a critical perspective of the programme as it develops (by providing a range of relevant information and feedback) in order to improve it as it evolves, rather than waiting until after the programme finishes. *Process evaluation* documents what actually happens in a programme (which may differ significantly from what was originally planned) and endeavours to answer the questions of how and why a programme succeeds – or fails. *Summative evaluation* is concerned with evaluating the impact of the programme after it finishes.

While most stakeholders in a programme are naturally interested in the long-term impacts achieved, the role of formative and process evaluation is equally important to understanding how the programmes work on the ground and which factors are most important in making them succeed (Padak, Sapin, & Baycich, 2002). As Weiss and Jacobs (1988, quoted in Thomas, 1998, p. 21) have observed about family literacy programmes in the US,

> More emphasis should be placed on efforts to collect and share practice-based information about implementation issues such as staff recruitment, training and supervision, outreach strategies, staff turnover and burnout, use of volunteers and meshing evaluation and service delivery needs.

This report incorporates both formative and process evaluation elements. It documents what has happened in this initial planning phase of the Manukau Family Literacy project, the issues that have arisen in its development, how these were resolved and offers some observations about why it has achieved what it has to date. It also includes a brief literature review of research in this area that has been used in guiding the programme's development. This evaluation has been approved by the Human Subjects Ethics Committee of The University of Auckland (Reference 2002/230). A second stage evaluation proposal is currently being considered by COMET for the second phase of the MFLP, which will cover the programmes once they are underway.

The basis of family literacy

Family literacy programmes began in Israel, the US and England in the 1970s and 1980s (Thomas, 1998). The term family literacy has been in circulation in many overseas countries for some time now, but is a relative newcomer in New Zealand. There have been some programmes in New Zealand using this term, but few have been constructed around the four key elements or the instructional intensity of overseas programmes or matched their intensity (see following section). A number of local reading programmes have involved parents, such as Home Instruction for Pre-school Youngsters (HIPPY) and Parents as First Teachers (PAFT), but neither has included literacy tuition for the parents. The adults' involvement in these programmes has been largely been built on the assumption that they already have good literacy skills.

The concept of family literacy is built around a series of assumptions and arguments peculiar to the situation of combining the teaching of adults and children

in one programme.[1] Some of these assumptions and arguments are backed by research findings; others are yet to be proven.

The first assumption behind family literacy as a form of educational provision is that "greater benefits to both adult and child learners will be attained by taking an integrated family literacy approach than by independently addressing adult and child needs through separate, high quality adult literacy and child intervention programmes" (Padak, Sapin & Baycich, 2002). The authors of this statement point out that this assumption is still largely untested[2], although it is testable using a large-scale, interdisciplinary effort involving adult literacy, family literacy and early childhood professionals. In the US, family literacy has been advocated as a much more effective form of provision than conventional adults-only programmes (Seaman, 1992).

A second argument is that many children who are struggling with literacy come from homes where the parents themselves also have literacy difficulties and therefore provide a significant 'two-tier catchment area' for literacy programmes, because "… however high the aspirations of a parent might be, illiterate adults[3] cannot model what they do not know" (Mikulecky & Lloyd, 1993, p. 36). While this assumption is sometimes criticised for its 'deficit' connotations, there is ample research evidence to show that there is a high correlation of literacy skills between generations of families (Sticht & Armstrong, 1994). For example, data from a national longitudinal study in Britain showed that 72% of children whose parents had reading problems and low incomes were in the lowest score reading group (ALBSU, 1993). The report concluded (pp. 18-19),

> The results suggest that children from families where parents have basic literacy problems are likely to suffer from a diminished opportunity to acquire literacy and numeracy skills. The disadvantage is compounded in families with a low income or where the parents achieved very low levels of educational attainment. Parents without these basic skills are less able to help their children learn literacy and numeracy skills during their early formative years. The group who are most at risk of growing up with the lowest levels of basic skills are children from low-income families where the parents have poor reading abilities.

A third argument behind family literacy is that parents (and especially mothers (Sticht & McDonald, 1990)) are not only influential in their children's literacy development, but are more likely to exert an even more positive influence when they are able to enhance their own literacy skills (Benjamin, 1993; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Mansbach, 1993). The desire for adults who have been unsuccessful in their own schooling to ensure that their children don't have the same experience is understandable and reasonably well documented (Benseman, 1989). In a discussion about the development of learning motivation in families, Smith and Spurling argue that the biology-led phase of life that occurs with parenthood "remoulds the parents' own awareness in such ways that their whole approach to motivational assessment can be altered" and that parenthood is "of central

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[1] There is also a growing literature on 'family learning,' which involves broader educational content than the teaching of literacy (Alexander & Clyne, 1995; Haggart, 2000).
[2] One US study has shown family literacy to produce demonstrably better results than stand-alone programmes (Philliber, Spillman, & King, 1996).
[3] American literature often uses the term 'illiterate', whereas it is both more acceptable and more accurate to refer to adults with reading difficulties, as few adults are totally illiterate.

importance in the whole motivation story, and has profound effects on wider social realities" (Smith & Spurling, 2001, p. 54). In other words, adults who may not be motivated to learn for themselves, find that the experience of being a parent not only increases their learning aspirations for their children, but through active involvement their own learning motivation increases, which in turn helps their children's motivation – thereby stimulating a positive learning spiral for both generations.

Family literacy – the US model

While there is considerable variation in how family literacy is interpreted in the US, there is also a large degree of commonality due to the definitions used in a range of legislation that releases funding. The legislation includes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Even Start), the Head Start Act, the Reading Excellence Act, the Workforce Investment Act (Adult Education and Literacy Act) and the Community Services Block Grant Act. Across all of these Acts, the term 'family literacy services' means services that are of sufficient intensity in terms of hours, and of sufficient duration[4], to make sustainable changes in a family and that integrate all of the following activities:

- interactive literacy activities between parents and their children
- training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children
- parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency
- an age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences (NCFL information sheet).

The above list is then usually translated into the following educational components (certainly in US programmes related to the NCFL and often referred to as the *Kenan Model* of family literacy):

1. Adult education[5] component designed to extend basic education skills, including teaching adult participants to:
   - think critically and creatively
   - solve problems
   - set goals and achieve them
   - acquire successful interpersonal skills
2. Children's education to promote the growth and development of young children and to engage parents in their child's educational program in order to foster meaningful involvement that will be maintained throughout the child's educational career.
3. Parent and child together time (PACT
4. Parent time to:
   - provide instruction on how children grow, develop and learn to read and write
   - address issues critical to family well-being and success
   - connect parents with a wide array of community resources
   - provide parents with opportunities to network and develop mutual support systems with others in the program.

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[4] Thomas (1998) points out that most Canadian family literacy programmes lack the intensity of their American counterparts.
[5] The term 'adult education' is often used synonymously with 'adult literacy' in the US.
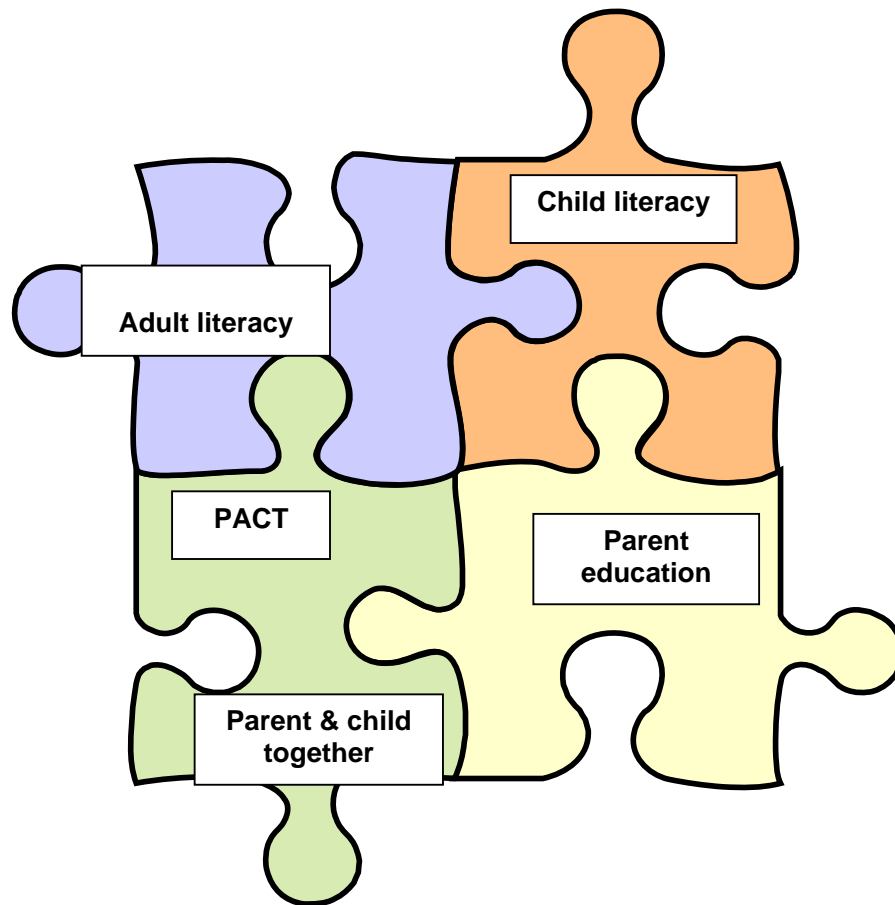
Family Literacy's Four Components

The diagram above shows what is sometimes referred to as the fifth element of family literacy programmes – integration. As Potts says (Potts, n.d., p. 4)

> Integration has become a critical, defining characteristic of family literacy services, working to create a system for delivery of curriculum, instruction and assessment. Rather than providing stand-alone, isolated services such as early childhood education or adult basic skills education, family literacy programs bring parents and children together to learn, weaving key strategies and message throughout the four primary components…. Integration of these components is used intentionally as a cohesive system to promote learning within the family unit.

Popp (quoted in Potts) says that the integration component

> means that the messages being emphasised in one component are being reinforced in the other components…if a message is repeated across all of the program components, the message will be adopted

more quickly and more deeply than if presented in only one component (esp. through common activities and common themes).

Potts identifies three key components that can either help or hinder integration in programmes: facilities (esp. ready access between the components and sufficient space for PACT), comprehensive planning and appropriate staff development.

Critiques of family literacy

Despite the impressive array of research studies that report a wide range of positive impacts in family literacy programmes (see later section in this report), there have been a number of critiques since they began. Most of the criticism centres on family literacy working from a 'deficit model' of education, where (well-meaning) middle-class educators teach the "right way" to read and parent with programme participants, ignoring their cultural, social, parental and literacy strengths, thereby undermining their values and self-esteem (Auerbach, 1989; Bates, Taylor, & Tomlin, n.d.). Family literacy is yet another attempt by middle class liberals to 'rescue' oppressed people by making them "do as we do," rather than accepting learners' culture, language and 'voice' (Addison, 2001). The critique is reflected in the cartoon below.

THE WHITE MIDDLE CLASS NUCLEAR FAMILY
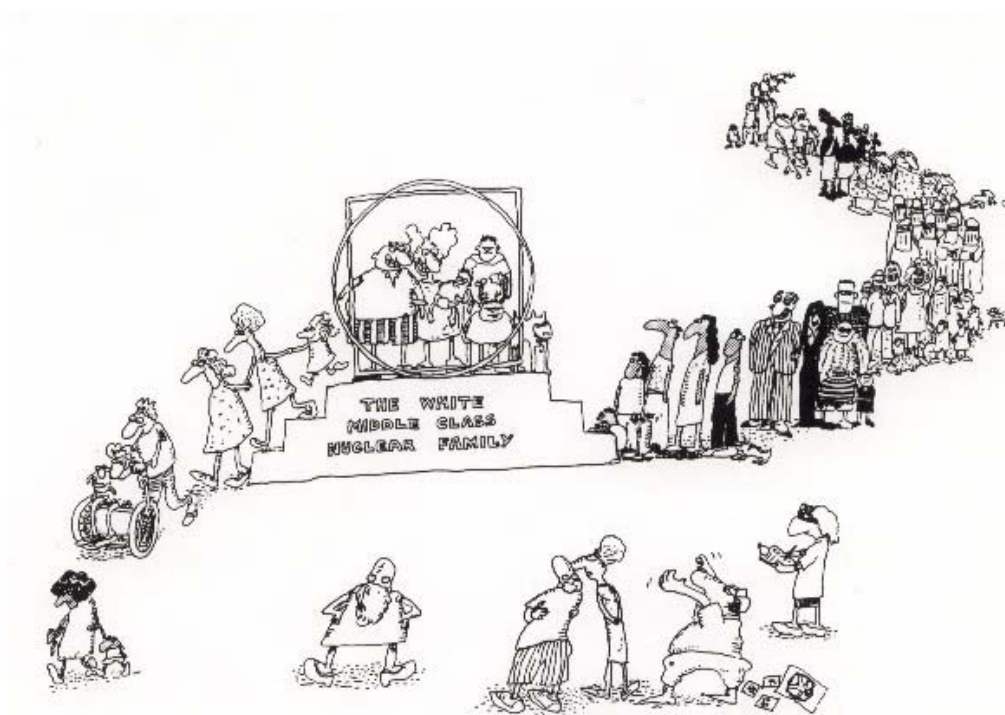
The counter-argument to this critique (sometimes referred to as a 'wealth' (Padak et al., 2002) or 'strengths' model - (Potts, n.d.) centres largely on how the programmes are organised and taught. Participatory models of planning and needs assessment firstly help ensure that the programmes are driven (at least in part) by the learners themselves. In this way the teaching content incorporates the learners' culture and modes of expression. Finally, teaching the learners in keeping with strong adult teaching principles helps ensure a more participatory and equal relationship.

Best practice in family literacy – research findings

There is a large body of research literature available evaluating the impact of family literacy programmes (Appel, 1997; Hayes, 1989; Mikulecky, Lloyd, & Brannon, 1995; National Center for Family Literacy, 1997; National Center for Family Literacy, 1996; Philliber, Spillman, & King, 1996a; Seaman, 1992; US Department of Education, 1998; Yarnell, Pfannenstiel, Lambson, & Treffeisen, 1998; National Center for Family Literacy, 1997) and some larger scale evaluations and meta-analyses of the literature (Brooks, Harman, Hutchison, Kendall, & Wilkin, 1996; Padak, Sapin & Baycich, 2002; Wasik, 2001). These studies typically describe and analyse a range of changes that occur for the participants as a result of participating in the programmes and are useful in proving the overall value of the programmes, but they do not necessarily identify the key features of what helps produce these impacts. There is also some writing on more philosophical aspects of family literacy practice that are derived from professional practice (Rasmussen, 1999; Benjamin and Lord, 1996, quoted in Padak, 2002, p. 5).

The following literature review (which draws on both individual studies and meta-analyses) therefore lists a range of programme characteristics and educational strategies that research studies have shown to be important. Such findings are useful in developing research-based 'best practice' in this area, rather than learning by trial and error.

Intensity of teaching literacy skills

Given the amount of resources being applied to adult literacy programmes in New Zealand and elsewhere in the Western world, it is surprising that there is so little evidence as to its effectiveness in helping these learners' literacy skills (Venezky, 1997). How much progress do learners make after attending programmes? How much and what type of tuition is needed for these learners to acquire the skills that they should have learnt at school?

Venezky reports that the evidence on this issue is sparse, often contradictory and not very encouraging when it is available. One study he reports showed only a grade and a half gain in reading skills after three years of tuition (p. 325); others showed no gains at all after 40 hours of instruction. These observations have also been confirmed in relation to workplace literacy programmes (Mikulecky & Lloyd, 1993).

One variable however that does appear to be crucial in achieving learning impact in these programmes however is the total amount and intensity of the teaching being delivered. In what is claimed to be "the first in the English-speaking world to provide reliable evidence of progress in adult literacy based on an adequately representative national sample" (Basic Skills Agency, 1995 p. 2), a British study reported that learners made "undramatic but worthwhile progress in both reading and writing." However in looking at why some learners made much greater progress than others, the authors found very few factors varied with the degree of progress with the exception of:

- students who had attended very regularly for over three hours per week on average
- tutors with professional teaching qualifications
- where tutors had help in the classroom (either volunteers or paid assistants).

In other words, intensive courses taught by qualified literacy tutors and backed by additional help in the classroom clearly achieved the greatest impact on the learners' literacy skills. The intensive nature of the teaching in successful family literacy programmes has also been identified in a number of research studies in the US (US Department of Education, 1996; Padak et al., 2002; Powell, 1996; St. Pierre & Layzer, 1996) and in Britain (Brooks, Harman, Hutchison, Kendall, & Wilkin, 1996).

Staffing

In their meta-analysis of family literacy research, Padak, Sapin & Baycich (2002) concluded that a variety of staff is needed in family literacy programmes to cover the complexity of need that arises. Ideally the staff should be composed of persons with expertise in adult education, early childhood education, elementary (i.e. primary) education, community education, social work and educational administration. Even with this diversity, once staff are in the programme they need to further develop their professional skills in keeping with the distinctive demands of family literacy. It is important that no one sector (adult or child) of the programme becomes dominant over the others. Initial staff selection, on-going professional development and joint planning are all therefore essential for successful programmes.

In a British review of family literacy programmes, Brooks, Harman, Hutchison, Kendall, & Wilkin (1996) also emphasised that teacher: learner ratios should never be higher than 7:1.

Curriculum

In order for programmes to avoid a deficit approach, curriculum development issues are paramount (DeBruin, Paris, & Seidenberg, 1997). Suggestions to ensure that the programmes are built on participants' (especially the adults) strengths include using their knowledge, experiences and interests to shape the curriculum, integrating curriculum throughout the programme and ensuring positive learning environments. While many programmes claim to work from their participants' interests, many simply revert to teacher-dominated practices (Padak, Sapin & Baycich, 2002).

Teaching practices

Teaching in family literacy is a multi-faceted skill where a holistic, pragmatic approach is both inevitable and desirable. This includes for example, the use of home visits for follow-up (Padak, Sapin & Baycich, 2002), locating programmes near to people's homes and the provision of crèche facilities to both minimise distractions for adult learners and increase educational involvement for other family members. Although they may be located in schools, the programmes need to recognise the adult component of the learners' needs, from the provision of appropriate adult facilities, through to teaching based on good adult learning principles (Brooks, Harman, Hutchison, Kendall, & Wilkin, 1996). As with any contemporary educational provision, adequate computer provision is also important.

Collaboration

By its very nature, family literacy requires collaboration with a wide range of agencies, including schools, tertiary providers, other educational groups, special education agencies, libraries, employment agencies, welfare groups and health agencies. As Padak, Sapin & Baycich (2002, p. 19) say,

> Collaboration is important because of the conceptual complexity of family literacy programming; unfortunately we know less about effective collaboration than any other aspect of family literacy… From a programmatic standpoint, collaboration can lead to integration of services and multidisciplinary curriculum efforts. Although establishing effective collaborative relationships requires some expertise and a commitment from all involved, collaborations tend to persist even after programs conclude, so the effort may well be worth it.

The importance of collaboration has also been found in Britain (Brooks, Harman, Hutchison, Kendall, & Wilkin, 1996).

A prototypical programme based on research findings

At the conclusion of their meta-analysis of 20 years of research on family literacy, Padak, Sapin & Baycich (2002, p. 31) describe a prototypical programme that embodies the best qualities of effective programmes.

> A successful family program is carefully planned. The planning always involves both external and internal constituents. Members of the community, including those representing schools and social service agencies, collaborate with family literacy programme planners. Parents also participate in program planning, as do the teachers who will be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the program. The goal for planning is to develop a program that reflects the cultural backgrounds and social and economic needs of the participating families.

> The program is based on a strengths model. Teachers understand the families in the program and see them as collaborators in program delivery. Curriculum is functional and integrated; authentic issues are used as the basis for the literacy learning activities, which themselves feature integration of the language arts. Instruction is purposeful; social interaction is prominent. Parents are involved as partners in all aspects of program planning, delivery and evaluation. Although day-to-day attendance is sometimes erratic because of other issues in adults' lives, they remain active in the program because it meets their educational, personal and social needs.

> Formative assessment is frequent and ongoing; assessment results are used refine program practices. Professional development for program staff is also frequent and on going. The program has stable, long-term funding.

The Manukau Family Literacy Programme (MFLP) to date

A brief timeline of MFLP

2001

February: COMET's Manukau Literacy Taskforce identified family literacy as a key potential area of work for the city's population

September: COMET hosted seminar on family literacy with Bonnie Lash Freeman from the US National Center for Family Literacy as guest speaker. Bonnie visited a number of locations around New Zealand

2002

January: COMET prepared a proposal for the Ministry of Education to fund family literacy programmes in Manukau City

March: COMET contracted by the Ministry of Education to prepare the infrastructure for two pilot family literacy projects in 2003

April: Bernardine Vester, Executive Officer of COMET included family literacy visits as part of her Eisenhower Fellowship to the US

May: Government budget included specific funding for family literacy programmes
        - unsuccessful advertising of co-ordinator position

July: Robin Houlker appointed as Manukau Family Literacy Programme co-ordinator; John Benseman of The University of Auckland appointed as the project evaluator

September/October: Robin Houlker visited the US for family literacy familiarisation and training, courtesy of National Center for Family Literacy; she was accompanied by Corinne Hansell (Ministry of Education) to help ensure alignment with existing Ministry initiatives in Manukau

September: public seminar to publicise the project and call for expressions of interest in participating in the programme

October: extensive briefings by the Co-ordinator about family literacy begun with government departments and other interested bodies

November: Bairds Mainfreight/MIT and Rowandale/Manurewa West Kindergarten chosen as the initial sites for programmes starting in early 2003; Mountain View chosen to start mid-2003, pending availability of funding; planning for a February 2003 start underway

December: detailed planning continued; start dates of late January for the Bairds Mainfreight and April for the Rowandale programme. WINZ agrees to provide funding for the first pilot programme at Bairds to ensure that participants pay no fees. COMET's Family Literacy Reference Group established and meets for the first time

Family Literacy – the Manukau Model

The Manukau Family Literacy Project has been primarily influenced to date by the work of the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) in Louisville, Kentucky and programmes associated with this centre. The initial visit of an NCFL staff member, Bonnie Lash Freeman, provided some initial stimulus for the project, three of the key project staff have since undergone training with the NCFL and much of the resource material has been supplied by the Center. Although this support has been gratefully acknowledged, the project is also endeavouring to access family literacy material from other countries and it is anticipated that the Manukau Model will evolve uniquely in response to its own environment and philosophy as it progresses. Indeed, the experience to date has shown that the programmes will vary considerably from site to site because of the particular characteristics and strengths of each location.

Programme goals

While it was clear from the outset that the Manukau Programme was aimed at improving the literacy skills of both the adult and child participants, it also became clear from both the literature and the discussion with potential funders and stakeholders that the programmes would be expected to meet a range of goals beyond the literacy sphere.

While there is probably broad consensus about the achievement of the literacy goals in the programme, the achievement of non-literacy outcomes is almost inevitably less clear. All educational programmes have broader impacts (referred to as the 'ripple effect' or wider benefits) than the specific knowledge, skills and attitudes being taught, but family literacy programmes usually specify a wide range of outcomes beyond specific literacy skills. In the US these include employment, family behaviours, health and welfare dependency, which is one of the reasons the programmes attract large amounts of funding, including from non-educational bodies. In the Manukau Programme, these goals have been less clear initially, although initial negotiations with various funders indicated that each probably had slightly different agendas according to their various institutional interests.

At the point of writing, the goals for the individual sites are still not very specific and will need to be clarified early in the programme in 2003. This will require deciding

- a process for specifying the goals (who will be involved? – funders, learners, programme co-ordinators, teachers?)
- the specific goals themselves.

It is only once the goals are clarified and specified, that appropriate evaluation procedures for the programmes can then be put in place.

Issues arising to date

Working across conventional educational boundaries

The New Zealand education system is highly stratified by age. Family literacy cuts across these stratifications, which generates challenges in various ways. Firstly, it requires early childhood, school and adult educators to work together in ways that

few have done previously. It requires them to understand each other's terminology, ways of working, bureaucratic structures and philosophies. While this has not led to any real conflict or misunderstandings, it has taken time for each of the parties to get to know each other and work things through in ways that are different from what they have done previously. Collaboration among the various stakeholders is certainly a strength of family literacy, but requires conscious effort to establish and maintain in the programme.

Secondly, funding sources do not always 'fit' readily into family literacy. Because of the mixture of ages, no one agency or funding source can cover all of the programme needs, which necessitates some degree of 'shopping round' and 'mixing and matching' of different funding sources. Once this process is further refined, it will be important to document the various sources utilised in the MFLP for others to refer to.

Achieving momentum

As with all new programme developments, there has been an element of 'chicken and egg' with the MFLP having to grapple with the difficult task of establishing something that is unknown in this country. While the American NCFL material has been invaluable in this respect, it still does not match the New Zealand context and there is an inevitable sense of suspicion about adopting overseas models. This difficulty has been minimised by the efforts of both the MFLP co-ordinator and the COMET Executive Officer spending a lot of time explaining family literacy to a wide range of interested groups and others indirectly involved such as teachers in the schools not directly involved in the MFLP. Explaining a concept clearly without pre-judging how it will be developed in the local context requires a careful balance of clarity and openness and this has been achieved very well by the staff concerned. This task should become a lot easier once the first couple of New Zealand programmes are underway and provide a ready source of local examples to promote the concept.

Defining family literacy

As with many innovations, the term family literacy appears to have been picked up by a number of literacy groups around the country over the past year or so. Most of these developments appear to be substantially different in their approach from MFLP[6]. While the proliferation of the term may well be inevitable, it has been useful to distinguish the MFLP from the other approaches, especially in efforts to secure funding. The COMET initiative have therefore decided to adopt the term *Manukau Family Literacy Programme* to refer to the overall project and then identify individual sites by names agreed upon by the parties concerned. It has been important to use fairly neutral names for the sites in order to not over-identify with any of the participating groups (e.g. Bairds – which can refer to either the kindergarten or the primary school).

'Ownership' of the programme

Because there are a number of institutions participating in the programme, there have been some occasions where it is not altogether clear who 'owns' the programme and therefore who has the final say in making some decisions. This is most obvious in relation to the tertiary providers who will be enrolling participants in

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[6] Based on my involvement as a committee member allocating Ministry of Education Adult Literacy Innovations Fund grants.

their institutions' courses, recruiting and paying the tutor and are legally responsible for the rolls etc and yet all of this occurs under the umbrella of the MFLP project. This relationship is being clarified in part by COMET negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding with one of the tertiary providers, but there will probably need to be further refinement of this relationship for the MFLP.

Programme aims

Because family literacy involves a wide range of stakeholders, it is inevitable that each group comes into the programme with a matching array of agendas and aims. While it is a strength of family literacy that programmes can achieve a range of different impacts, it is also true that this diversity of interests needs to be watched. Probably the most important strategy in this respect is to constantly clarify and specify what each stakeholder's aims are for the programme so that the overall agenda is on the table for all to see and debate. The identification of the programme aims will vary from site to site according to the needs and interests of the various bodies, but should be made explicit early on and be revised throughout the planning process.

Recruiting staff

Effective programmes require skilled, well-trained staff. Because there is no precedent to the MFLP, recruiting appropriate staff has not been easy to date. This is not helped by the fact that the employment will be mainly on a short-term basis, which is not especially attractive for experienced practitioners. The problem is more acute for the adult educator (who is the only 'new' appointment in the programme), as the schools and kindergartens are usually able to tap into their usual staffing sources for any additional appointments. The programme has worked on the assumption that training will be essential for all of the staff right from the start and will need to be built into the programme on a regular basis.

In the case of the adult educator there has also been some degree of uncertainty about the degree of responsibility the various organisations have for this position. While it is clear that the tertiary provider will be the direct employer of the adult educator[7] and will be responsible for the terms of employment and associated administration, it has been less clear for example the extent to which MFLP will be involved in the selection of the staff member (the pragmatics of putting the programme in place in the short time space available has meant that this will be done by MIT, although they have indicated a willingness to involve MFLP in the process). These various responsibilities in relation to this position need to be clarified and formally agreed.

MFLP have stipulated from the outset that early childhood staff will need a minimum of a Diploma in Early Childhood Education. At present no comparable qualification has been specified for the adult education positions. All school staff involved meet conventional school qualification requirements.

The appointment of the programme co-ordinator was not straightforward. The initial strategy of advertising (twice) in the New Zealand Herald attracted a total of only five applications, none of whom was judged to be suitable. A second strategy of publicising the position through the networks of COMET's Literacy Taskforce produced a much higher quality group of applicants, which led to the appointment

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[7] This is also true for the other staff involved, with the kindergartens and schools as the primary employers.

of the present co-ordinator. Personal approaches and using networks are probably the most fruitful means of recruiting staff for programmes.

Recruiting programme organisations/institutions

While there were not a large number of applicants to join the programme, the selection of the final participating sites was seen by everyone involved as extremely satisfactory. All three sites chosen involve Decile One schools, have very low socio-economic catchment areas, high numbers of people shown in the International Adult Literacy Survey to have high literacy needs and have other indications of social need (e.g. truancy and transience) suitable for family literacy. In addition to their degree of educational and social need, all three sites showed considerable enthusiasm and have made suitable facilities available for the programme.

When the participating organisations were being selected for the programme, it became clear that one of the applicants was in a somewhat precarious state financially and organisationally. Although this organisation had a number of attractive qualities and certainly involved learners who would be ideal for a family literacy programme, their organisational viability would have probably put the programme at unnecessary risk. This situation probably only applies to privately owned organisations as State ownership usually ensures high minimal levels of resourcing and facilities, even if they are in low decile areas (as all successful applicant schools have been so far).

It is also clear that involving State-owned institutions is less complex in terms of using government funding than is the case with privately owned institutions. At the point of writing, the only non-State participating institutions are the Mormon Church and the Manurewa West Independent Kindergarten, which is a community-owned incorporated society, but no significant issues have arisen to date in this regard.

The Manurewa Mormon Church One is part of the Rowandale programme as a site for the adult education component. Initially the church's involvement was accepted hesitantly because it was felt that its clear religious affiliations/connotations could be off-putting to non-Mormon participants. This potential difficulty however was offset by the high degree of interest shown by the Church's representatives, their obvious commitment to education, their willingness to contribute to the programme and their well-established links with prospective participants for the programme (especially Pasifika people).[8] While it may be desirable for the participating organisations to be perceived as reasonably neutral so that the programme is not over-identified with any one section of the community, such affiliations may well be unavoidable, and even advantageous, in some cases.

Management structures

One of the aims of the project has been to set up management structures that are efficient, effective and minimise people's time. Both of the sites planning to get underway early in 2003 have a planning/management committee made up of the MFLP co-ordinator and at least one representative from the early childhood, school and adult education components that meets weekly (I usually attend these meetings in my role as the evaluator). This structure has worked well thus far and is expected to continue at least until the programmes are underway. Administrative

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[8] It will not be possible for participants to smoke or drink tea or coffee on their premises however; the smoking ban also applies to schools.

procedures are being negotiated by COMET with each of the sites and although not fully finalised at present, will probably be done predominantly through the schools' administrations. The COMET Family Literacy Reference Group established in December 2002 will be responsible for setting overall policy for the MFLP.

Adult education component

The adult education salary component has probably been the most difficult component to incorporate into the programme. It requires a tertiary provider to supply payment for a full-time teacher (approx. 25 hours contact time) off-site for a minimum of 20 weeks in the first instance, probably extending to 40 weeks over the full year. Manukau Institute of Technology has provided this resource for the Bairds site by offering a planned parent education programme that has been approved by its formal programme procedures. This has required the planning of an explicit curriculum in advance of the programme starting and a requirement that it be underway by the end of January. At the time of writing the Rowandale site has decided to seek expressions of interest from Manukau Institute of Technology, AUT and The University of Auckland as their tertiary partner.

Facilities, timetables and regulations

Considerations of the facilities available for the MFLP were one of the factors considered when choosing the sites for the programme. Initially at Bairds a spare classroom was chosen, but a better site has since been offered by one of the Bairds Mainfreight teachers offering to move out of her classroom – a gesture that clearly reflects the goodwill towards the MFLP and determination of the school to ensure that optimum conditions are provided. This second site is central in the school, has cooking facilities and adult toilets available and is close to the library and the early childhood centre. Some modifications may be carried out on the room, but it is suitable for an immediate start. Manukau Institute of Technology is situated nearby and may be used occasionally once the programme is underway.

The facilities at Rowandale have not been as readily available. This site will probably use a combination of the kindergarten, the Mormon Church and possibly a room at Rowandale School.

Both sites have some access to school computer facilities, although efforts are being made to secure at least some computers for the family literacy rooms.

One of the most significant issues in getting the programmes underway at both sites has involved the changing of the kindergartens' present operational licences. This has mainly involved lengthening the duration of the sessions from three to four hours and being able to run full day programmes in order to provide sufficient childcare cover for the parents to participate up to 25 hours a week. The experience and knowledge of the MFLP co-ordinator in this field, the close involvement of key Auckland Kindergarten Association personnel in project planning and the generous co-operation of the kindergarten staff involved have all been invaluable in overcoming this particular difficulty.

Selection/recruitment of participants

The short timeframe and the need to start the Bairds site in late January has not made the process of participant selection easy. Staff in the participating institutions have agreed to approach potential participants initially and a brochure has been

produced under the auspices of Manukau Institute of Technology. US experience is that shoulder tapping is important early on (Padak, 2002), although less so in Britain (Brooks, 1996, p. 102) where publicity letters were the most common recruitment strategy.

Trying to recruit participants in the period preceding Christmas and then over the holiday period is certainly not ideal, but has been necessitated by other procedural constraints. Recruitment for the other programmes should be easier and can build on lessons learnt at Bairds. Overseas experience points to recruitment becoming easier once programmes gather momentum.

One issue that has been discussed in relation to participant recruitment is the possibility of some parents having criminal records. While these parents periodically come on to school premises, their involvement in family literacy would mean much longer times on site. Anyone employed by a State-funded early childhood or primary school is required to have Police clearance, but this requirement does not apply to non-paid people. Manukau Institute of Technology (with whom the participants will be officially enrolled in the Bairds programme) on the other hand has a policy of not requiring any disclosure of criminal records and is philosophically opposed to such a procedure. The suggested solution for this issue has been a voluntary disclosure by the participants when enrolling.

Longer term issues

Even at this early stage of development, several issues are emerging that will need to be resolved in the longer term if family literacy is to become a part of the New Zealand educational landscape. These issues will be re-visited in future evaluation reports as the MFLP develops.

Where does family literacy 'fit'?

Family literacy does not sit readily within conventional educational structures, and this is true both overseas (Padak et al., 2002) and in New Zealand. This difficulty is largely because traditional educational systems are very age-bounded and family literacy transcends these traditional categories. This lack of 'fit' can be seen in problems of accessing funding, finding appropriate staff and co-ordination between the different educational players involved. Although this issue should diminish as the project proceeds, thought will need to be given to where family literacy should be located and the funding directed to it.

Funding of adult education component

The MFLP experience to date has been that it is not easy to readily access flexible funding suitable for the demands of family literacy. Ideally, funding for the adult education component should be not tied to specific, pre-planned courses (which would enable programme planning based on emergent needs in the group), have flexible starting/finishing dates and be available in quantities suitable for a sustained programme. Such an alternative may be available or made possible, but this has not been apparent thus far.

General principles of the MFLP

As a result of its development to date, a number of key principles have started to emerge for the MFLP:

- tuition is free to participants
- recruitment of adult participants will be aimed at the greatest need
- participants need to commit their involvement to the duration of the programme
- high levels of attendance will be encouraged
- facilities will be comfortable and appropriate for adults, as well as children
- child participants will be between two and seven years of age
- the programme follows the Kenan Model of Family Literacy's four components
- programme planning will be given high priority and carefully co-ordinated across all four components
- professional development for staff will be integral to the programme
- all participating institutions will be fully informed of programme developments
- each site recognises the contribution of each participating institution, but none is seen as dominant
- the programme needs to be adapted to the unique circumstances and needs of each individual site
- technology and Internet will be incorporated wherever possible
- in order to ensure that the programmes are sustainable over the longer term, existing funding sources and structures are used wherever possible.

Elements to include in evaluations

The research available on the impact of family literacy programmes is extensive and impressive, especially in the US. This is due in large part to the evaluation requirements that come with the funding sources, both at the federal and state levels. Because funding comes with a range of accountability tags, there is considerable pressure to prove the value of the programmes. Because of these requirements and a greater acceptance of testing than New Zealand, the US studies are built strongly round the use of standardised tests of literacy gain (for both children and parents), as well as a range of other tests to measure broader impacts such as family cohesiveness and welfare dependence (Alamprese & Tao, 2001)[9]. This type of approach to evaluation of family literacy in New Zealand is probably not appropriate for a range of reasons, including the poor transferability of the test instruments and some resistance to testing by potential adult participants.

Below is a fairly comprehensive list of elements that might be included in evaluations in the New Zealand context. The final choice of elements for the evaluations will depend on programme aims, which in turn will reflect the various stakeholders' interests. All four components of family literacy should be covered to capture the comprehensive nature of the programmes.

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[9] They also include factors as diverse as the use of large and small muscles, drug and substance use, health care, depression, budgeting and purchasing decisions, sexual abuse, personal cleanliness, marriage duration and wealth (Padak, Sapin & Baycich, 2002).

Adult literacy and education

- gains[10] in reading, writing, numeracy and oracy skills
- out-of-programme reading (frequency, ease, types, locations
- retention and attendance at FL programme
- feelings of 'control over life' vs. 'fate' or 'chance'
- general self-confidence
- social confidence
- gains in learning motivation and enjoyment
- interest in making personal long-term plans, including education
- previous involvement in literacy and/or post-school education
- enrolment in other educational programmes
- attitudes towards schools
- participation in school activities (e.g. school trips, parent interviews, as literacy helpers)
- participation in voluntary organisations
- participation in civic activities (church, voluntary organisations)
- choosing reading as a leisure activity
- use of public library
- purchase of books
- use of technology (ATMs, computer, Internet)
- reduction in watching TV
- gains in employment
- voting behaviour

Child literacy and education

- early childhood/school attendance
- retention and attendance at FL programme
- gains in reading, writing, numeracy and oracy skills
- independent reading
- changes in school reports
- completion of homework
- gains in general knowledge
- changes in general academic performance
- changes in learning motivation and enjoyment
- changes in co-operation with peers and siblings
- participation in extra-curricular activities
- involvement in remedial programmes
- general self-confidence
- use of public library
- manners and standards of dress
- changes in TV watching
- changes in co-operation at home

Parents and child together (PACT)

- parent reading to child outside home
- parent helping with homework

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[10] Some studies have looked at gains over a longer period of 4+ years (National Center for Family Literacy, 1997).

- time spent playing together
- public library visits
- communication skills
- story-telling
- parent/child interactions
- participation in cultural events
- participation in sports

Parent education

- stability of home environment
- 'parent efficacy'
- attitudes towards children
- confidence in parenting role
- parent's knowledge of child development
- displaying children's work in the home
- involvement of other parent (usually father) and extended family in FL activities
- health indicators
- reduction in physical punishment by parents
- parental aspirations for child
- expansion of social supports

Types of evaluation

In a review of Even Start evaluations, Wasik (2001) found that the great majority (75%) of evaluations followed participants for one project year and only 11% followed them for more than one year. She also found a wide range of assessment methods:

- adult direct assessment (70%)
- child direct assessment (64%)
- adult report on adult (65%)
- parent report on satisfaction (48%)
- adult report on family/home (42%)
- adult report on child (38%)
- record abstraction (35%)
- teacher report on child (29%)
- teacher report on adult (27%)
- observation of child and/or adult (19%)
- observation of family/home (11%)
- report from Early Start data (9%)

Study design

The types of study design included:

- randomised experiment (none)
- one-group pre-post study (76%)
    - all project families (60%)

- random sample of families (none)
- convenience sample (6%)

- one-group post-only study (31%)
  - all project families (18%)
  - random sample of families (none)
  - convenience sample (1%)

The most common measurement methods used for the children were the PreSchool Inventory, the Peabody Vocabulary Test or the PreSchool Language Scale (64%); parent interviews about the child (38%) or teacher reports (29%). The adult participants were most often assessed by the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System or the Tests of Adult Basic Education (70%) and self-reports (27%).

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