



EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK

Faculty of Education and Social Work
The University of Auckland
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Successful summer blogging project gets a funding boost

Over 1000 school children may be blogging over the summer to keep their literacy skills up, thanks to the partnership between the Manaiakalani schools, and the University of Auckland, and new support from the NEXT Foundation.

Called The Summer Learning Journey, the blogging project has already seen many hundreds of children from low decile schools blog over the previous two summer holidays. It is the brain child of Dr Rachel Williams, with her colleagues at the Woolf Fisher Research Centre and in the Manaiakalani schools.

Dr Williams and her colleagues have been leading the Summer Learning Journey Project since 2015. This summer they hope to have over 1000 bloggers take part.

The project, also supported by the MSA Charitable Trust, originally started in one cluster of schools, Manaiakalani, in Tamaki, east Auckland.

But now thanks to the NEXT Foundation support, as part of the University of Auckland Campaign For All Our Futures, the project has been boosted to the six Manaiakalani clusters of schools across New Zealand, encompassing 50 schools and so far 1400 children. The aim is to have 2000 year 4 to 10 pupils registered to blog with the Summer Learning Journey programme by the start of the holidays.

The project helps kids keep up their literacy skills over the summer holidays and counters the “Summer Slump” – where school students can lose a year or more of their academic progress in writing when they break for the six week summer holiday. It can take months for that slide to be recovered.

Dr Williams, along with her University of Auckland Summer Scholar assistant, Hazel Fowler, is using the NEXT funds to resource the costs of staff (programme managers and bloggers in each cluster). The programme managers are individuals from the local community who are passionate about providing students with learning opportunities over summer. The 12 bloggers are Bachelor of Education students from the Faculty of Education and Social Work who will provide on-line support for the children, blogging back with the children over the duration of the summer holiday.

Dr Williams says she is always overjoyed when she sees the effect the blogging has on the children’s learning and literacy.

“It is something I feel really compelled to do for our students, many of whom do not have ready access to literacy learning opportunities over summer.

“It’s incredibly humbling and really exciting to see the degree to which students are engaging positively with the programme and with each other online during the holiday.”

And she says the teachers notice the difference in students when school starts again in February.

"They can tell who was a Summer Learning student and who wasn't. They can just tell in a sea of 30 students who has taken up the challenge and blogged over summer."

NEXT is a strategic philanthropic Foundation that invests in transformational initiatives in education and the environment. The investment in the Summer Learning Journey is part of its focus on Teacher Excellence.

"Summer Learning Journey is an excellent example of a well-structured education innovation with robust evidence and a scalable model," says NEXT CEO Bill Kermode.

"It has had a significant impact on students' writing performance in the holiday periods, and there are signs of other benefits too, not least the students' confidence, their work ethic and their aspirations. NEXT is thrilled to support the roll out of Summer Learning Journey to more schools around the country."

To celebrate the partnership NEXT has made a video using year-8 Panmure Bridge School pupil Daniel Grady.

Daniel says he loves the blogging, as he gets to learn more about other countries and topics by completing the blogging activities.

"It can be fun and you learn lots of different things," Daniel says.

You can watch Daniel's video [here](#).

You can read more about the Summer Learning Journey here:
<http://www.manaiakalani.org/our-story/research-evaluation/summer-learning-journey-2015-16>

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Notes for Editors:

The Six Summer Learning Journey clusters are

Ako Hiko: Mt Roskill (seven primary/intermediate schools)
Kaikohekohe: Northland (eight schools including two high schools)
Kootitui: Papakura (six schools including one high school)
Toki Pounamu: West Coast (South Island) (13 schools including two high schools)
Uru Manuka: Christchurch/Hornby (seven schools including one high school)
Manaiakalani: Tamaki (original cluster = 11 schools including one high school)

Total schools: 52
Total registrations to date: 1550+

About the University of Auckland Campaign For All Our Futures

Through the University of Auckland Campaign For All Our Futures, the University aims to address, with philanthropic help, some of the key issues facing New Zealand and the world. Publicly launched in September 2016, the campaign has so far raised \$220 million for multiple projects, including in the areas of cancer research, innovation and entrepreneurship, online STEM subject education, and scholarships for students.

Information about the campaign is available at www.giving.auckland.ac.nz