

Media release

Monday, 28 March 2022

“A promising start, but the proof is in the implementation”

Education expert responds to Government’s new literacy strategy

The Government’s plan to improve teaching and learning outcomes for students through a sweeping redesign of the national literacy, communication and maths curriculum is a good start, but, its success relies on its design and implementation.

Dr Rebecca Jesson, University of Auckland Associate Professor at the Faculty of Education and Social Work and the Research and Academic Director for Tui Tuia | The Learning Circle, applauds the Government for listening to the voices of educators and taking on education’s ‘gritty issues’ in one sweep.

“The Literacy & Communication Strategy extends beyond reading and writing. It takes a wider view of literacy to include oral language, listening skills as well as digital literacy which is critical to our world today. It also acknowledges that being literate in Aotearoa New Zealand today involves an understanding of diverse cultural perspectives and the different learning approaches needed to include te ao Māori and Pacific worldviews.

“We are encouraged by the system-wide approach taken by the Ministry of Education and their commitment to finding solutions in one cohesive plan for every learner,” said Dr Jesson.

She says the strategy backs up the collaborative approach used by Tui Tuia | Learning Circle in their partnership with University of Auckland education researchers to deliver evidence-based professional learning and development that speak to the diverse needs of children.

“Our approach has always been to employ a number of evidence-based literacy strategies depending on the diverse needs of the child. We know how important a good start to literacy is for every child and their whānau. For this to work, it is critical to have a knowledgeable teacher and the right level of support for the children based on their individual needs.”

Dr Jesson welcomes the strategy’s commitment to digital literacy.

“To thrive in today’s world, students need to critically interpret, manage and create meaning through ever-evolving online channels. We need to expand literacy teaching, to move beyond traditional reading and writing skills. Digital literacy enables students to discern the quality of online information and provides them with the skills to communicate safely” she said.

She supports the strategy’s new ‘common practice model’ as it makes sense to link teaching and learning practices for literacy, communication and maths across the whole education system, from early childhood education through to Year 13.

“We welcome this chance to bring diverse voices into respectful dialogue.

“The proposed common practice model provides an opportunity to bring New Zealand research findings to scale. It values the combination of research and practical knowledge about effective teaching. It also addresses the issue of the variability of teaching practice across schools and provides a clear vision for teacher education.”

Dr Jesson hopes the ambitious plan is well resourced.

“It’s no secret that there is a lack of access to literacy development support. The challenge now is to look at what the data is showing us and design appropriate solutions in an increasingly complex and diverse society. What is needed is a shift to a collaborative model that is designed specifically for our current context, and less reliance on simplistic resource based solutions.

“The strategy is a good start and its implementation will require real effort. We are eager to move forward and build positive literacy outcomes for our tamariki and rangatahi.”

ENDS

Ko te ahurei o te tamaiti arahia ō tatou māhi
Let the uniqueness of our children guide our work.”

About Dr Rebecca Jesson

Dr Rebecca Jesson is an Associate Professor in literacy education at The University of Auckland - Faculty of Education and Social Work. She was recently appointed as the Research and Academic Director Tui Tuia | The Learning Circle, and leads the National Reading Recovery Centre.

Rebecca's research is co-designed with schools and their communities in New Zealand and the Pacific. Her research is transforming the way literacy education is delivered in the Pacific Islands in a culturally sustaining way. She focuses on teaching and learning innovations that will improve the literacy learning experiences of students. Her studies use evidence to support school groups to develop strategic direction for professional learning and school change.

Rebecca has been a primary school teacher across a number of schools and year levels, including Reading Recovery. Her Masters of Education (2001) research focussed on implementing critical thinking in the English curriculum. Her PhD (2010) research was situated in a schooling intervention and explored different models of professional development in teaching writing.

Reading Recovery now provides an early literacy strategy that supports an all-school approach to lifting literacy rates in schools. Reading Recovery is a three tiered support framework that will enable a broader range of children to access literacy support.

About Tui Tuia | Learning Circle

Tui Tuia | Learning Circle delivers quality education and mentoring programs designed to inspire, uplift and help prepare schools and kura, whānau and communities for the challenges of today and tomorrow.

Our alignment with the University of Auckland enables us to deliver services and solutions that are grounded in best-in-class research, insights and innovation.

Our passionate and experienced team works alongside leaders, teachers and school communities in New Zealand, Australia and the Pacific, co-constructing Professional Learning & Development (PLD) programmes that focus on lifting professional practice and improving outcomes for learners.

Our programme offering includes Leadership, Assessment for Learning, Cultural Capability for Māori and Pasifika, Mātauranga Māori and te reo Māori, Curriculum Design as well as specialist services like Reading Recovery, Literacy support and Learning Languages programmes.

learningcircle.co.nz

For further information please contact Joe Public Relations: Lisa Joe - 021 326662/

lisa@joepublic.co.nz or Sarah Cameron – 027 354 7747 / sarah@joepublic.co.nz