

West5:4Trauma

EVALUATION OF AN ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT TO
EXPLORE TRAUMA SENSITIVE SCHOOLING FOR NEW
ENTRANTS IN WEST AUCKLAND PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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Introduction

West 5: 4 Trauma has been an action research project run in 5 primary schools and West Auckland. The aim of the research project has been to share learning about how to best support new entrant's and very young primary age students who have experienced trauma to engage in their education. It was initiated by the leadership team at Fruitvale primary school, and since then has grown to include four other primary schools.

In 2018 Fruitvale was faced with a growing number of new entrants who presented with challenging behaviours, over sensitisation, and were not developmentally ready for the mainstream school environment or the curriculum level. What the school realised was that for their students, this was often the result of trauma in the early lives. The Fruitvale leadership team had committed to never excluding a student, and instead took a more proactive and supportive approach to find solutions for what they could see was a growing challenge for the school. With the support of all teachers and staff at the school they embarked on a courageous approach to developing what they later called the Riroriro program. This involved a dedicated classroom that had been set up similar to an early childhood centre or home environment. It had a dedicated teacher who had the skills and required to engage seven young male students who were the first into the programme. In addition, Fruitvale leadership engage support from other services like a play therapist a teacher aid, and Managed Moves which supported to students to access wraparound supports.

What they found at the end of 2018 was a way of supporting their most vulnerable students to develop the self-regulation and sense of safety they needed to then be successfully transitioned into a mainstream class. In that mainstream class was a teacher who also understood and had support to engage with the students when things went well and not so well. Fruitvale leadership team also recognised that in order to share their learning they needed to help each student continue to develop and engage more successfully in their learning. What they also realised was that ever school was slightly different and there was more learning to be done.

They reached out to 4 other primary schools who had similar challenges with young primary age students. Together the schools have used a framework of eight pillars and three focus areas to help organise and structure their learning. They have engaged trauma expert Kathryn Berkett to ensure that their approach with these children was appropriate and their staff were equipped with the skills knowledge and understanding that they needed.

Over the course of 2020 and 2021 these for primary schools have purposely focused staff time, resource, and space into the West 5: 4 Trauma model and helped determine the common attributes required to successfully support children who have experience trauma to engage in education. Every school is slightly different and any model needs to be able to be adapted to suit the context of school's unique environment and circumstance. West 5: 4 Trauma has done exactly that, and each of the five primary schools involved in this action research project have been able to adapt or use the key attributes of the model in a slightly different way. However, there are commonalities and these commonalities I what this report goes into more depth on.

The aim of this report is to share the experience of the West 5: 4 Trauma schools and the learning that they have made in developing a model that they believe goes a long way to ensuring young primary age students have a successful education pathway. The schools involved also acknowledge that there is far more learning to do. COVID-19 was a significant factor across the entire period of this action research project and most definitely had an impact on the ability of schools to influence the outcomes that they wanted to for all students. However, with every challenge there are silver linings. The learning that COVID-19 the lockdowns and restrictions involved created have been invaluable in helping develop a more robust model that supports whanau as well as students.

It is the intent of all schools involved to continue on this journey of learning and informing a model they believe makes a real difference in the education pathway for their most at risk and vulnerable students. This report therefore is more an interim report and acknowledges the journey so far, provides insights tools and links to further learning for those that are interested.

The Problem

Experiencing trauma can impact behavior, learning, and relationships. Our schools are seeing an increasing number of children arriving as new entrants who are presenting with over sensitization, and behaviours that suggest they have experienced trauma. We know that trauma experienced as a result of family harm impacts over 6000 children and young people in our West Auckland community every year. We know that COVID has exacerbated existing mental health and wellbeing challenges of parents, and that our mental health services have more referrals than they can manage including for increase alcohol and other drug use. We also know that the key finding in a 2019 Health Promoting Schools research project was that schools were in crisis with increased challenging behaviours and high and complex mental health and wellbeing needs of students.

Statistics show that increasingly young primary school children are being excluded or stood down from school. We know that exclusion from school is the worst possible outcome for a child that is already experiencing major challenges due to trauma. The only response is to ensure our schools are better equipped to work with this cohort of children, thus contributing to removal or minimization of barriers to education, and improving their chance of a successful future.

Studies have shown that traumatic experiences in childhood can diminish concentration, memory, and the organizational and language abilities of children, making it difficult for them to succeed in school. In addition, it can impact a child's ability to self-regulate, behave appropriately. When faced with these challenges, success even on day one of school can be a challenge. So starting your school career with these major barriers to success has long lasting impacts throughout the child's schooling. The earlier support can be provided the better.

Not surprisingly, trauma resulting from overwhelming experiences has the power to disturb a student's development of these foundations for learning. It can undermine the development of language and communication skills, thwart the establishment of a coherent sense of self, compromise the ability to attend to classroom tasks and instructions, interfere with the ability to organize and remember new information, and hinder the grasping of cause-and-effect relationships—all of which are necessary to process information effectively. Trauma can also interfere with the capacity for creative play, which is one of the ways children learn how to cope with the problems of everyday life. (Trauma Sensitive Schooling)¹

The Approach

The overall approach of W5:4T was to look at how to create the right learning environment to enable the new entrants that had the biggest behaviour and learning challenges preventing them from successfully engaging in education. The overall aim was to work with the children to their ability to self-regulate, develop socio-emotional language skills and early learning skills so that they could then be transitioned into more mainstream learning environments.

In each of the five schools involved a small number of children were selected by the senior leadership teams of the school to participate. They all employed or nominated from staff a dedicated teacher who would work directly with the children. They all used teacher aides and learner aides to support the children and teacher. The location of the learning environment for each of the schools was slightly different and the range of programmes used to work with the children was slightly different with some overlaps and commonalities. All of the schools were involved in trauma

¹ <https://traumasensitiveschools.org/trauma-and-learning/the-problem-prevalence/>

sensitive schooling professional development work with Karthyn Berkett. All schools accessed additional supports from Ministry of Education and or other agencies and organizations. So for each of the schools, the intent was the same, but the pathway and approach slightly different.

Through the process of observation and exploration with the schools leadership teams, this report attempts to summarise the overall learnings, and from that key principles of success. The intention is to use those principles to guide the high level framework of a model that other schools and communities can adapt to suit their own context.

Overall outcome / impact

For students:

- Children who have experienced trauma can achieve in education
- All students are better supported due to improved understanding of trauma and impact on behavior and development by all staff.

For schools

- A better understanding of trauma and the impact on behavior and development that can be used across all areas.
- A kete of tools, practices and resources that can be used to inform how a school can better work with young students who have experienced trauma or who are over sensitized.

Outcomes for Students involved to date.

Schools were asked in a survey to feedback about outcomes for the children that had been involved in the programme in terms of improvements self-regulation. Behaviours both in the classroom and in the playground with other children, attendance, engagement and achievement in their learning. Overwhelming the majority of children involved had significant progress in all areas. (See survey responses in the appendices)

The significance of this is immense. Faced with a challenging start these children were not ready for schooling both in terms of their development level, ability to self-regulate and relate to others. The ability of these schools to adapt their approach to transition into school for these children has ensured the appropriate development of skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to successfully transition through their early years of schooling. Reinforcing and supporting this further is the whole school approach. By supporting the whole school to take a more trauma sensitive approach the school has improved the possibility these students to continue to succeed in their education.

Framework

The framework for this action research project is based on the understanding of 'what' is needed to better support at risk and vulnerable young people. The team drew heavily on brain development theory, attachment theory, and trauma sensitive schooling knowledge.

The framework provides a way or organize the learning on about how to support children to engage in and achieve in education by looking through the lens of the 8 Pillars via three key focus areas:

- Place – (Physical environment and resource)
- People - children, staff, whanau, other professionals
- Programmes / systems / processes – in class programmes, and the various systems processes etc. in schools, in community etc.

This report uses this framework to structure the findings and provide insights for others interested in taking a similar approach to working with oversensitised students.

PILLARS

Over Arching Pillars and their outcomes



Summary of Findings

Below is a summary of the commonalities found between all of the schools involved. Importantly, each of the schools had quite different contexts and set ups. However, there are common elements, themes or approaches that were important to creating successful outcomes.

One of the most important aspects in this work is the sense of safety. This is pivotal, and can be developed, strengthened and built on across all of the seven pillars, even though for this report it is presented as its own pillar.

	Safety	Staff	Whole School	Prof Dev	Other Experts	Transition	Cultural
Place	Creating a physical space that feels safe. This could be a dedicated classroom for the students in the programme, or a quiet place for respite and retreat, when students are in a mainstream classroom.	Most schools employed from within their own community – often within their own school. Mutual knowledge and understanding of each other, the objectives they were jointly trying to meet, and the challenge.	<p>All staff within the school need to be on board. This ensures that as children transition through the school all staff have increased capability, and full school support to better work with the children.</p> <p>Inclusion of the children within the ‘whanau’ of the school is important – they are not ‘to the side’ they completely included - by staff and students, within class or in the playground. Consideration therefore of where dedicated classes are placed is important if a school chooses use that approach.</p>	Access to support and professional development onsite is helpful. This can be through peer support and development by leadership team and dedicated teacher to other teachers in the school. Support in this way reassures staff that support is available when dealing with challenging behaviours and situations. This also improves practice across the school.	The ability to bring outside professionals who have expertise in mental health and wellbeing in particular is helpful. Access of these services through the school helps maintain the sense of safety, as the location is familiar.	Transition into new classes needs to be tailored to the child with flexibility to adapt as the transition progresses, which then allows for ‘bumps on in the road’	Many of the schools in the research incorporated the cultural diversity of their students within the room via books, posters, etc.

People	Consistency is key as over time trust and a sense of safety is built. The introduction of new people into the class/group can be disruptive and difficult – whether that is a new teacher, support person or child.	Teachers and Teacher aides ideally are experienced teachers who understood the age (and younger) and had a passion for working with this kind of cohort of children.	Leadership team from the schools must be fully behind the work as they provide support and enable not only the staff working directly with the children, but the whole school approach.	Professional Development opportunities for all staff is important. Particularly around the impacts of trauma, and strategies for	Access to support who can link the school, teachers, child and whanau to the right services ensures that expertise can be provided as needed, and moves the school into a sense of partnership and collaboration with other services. The school are part of a broader community team. (e.g. Strengthening Families, Managed Moves, Whanau Ora etc.)	Teachers and teacher aides open lines of communication to support the child in their transition. If the child has teacher aide support this should be maintained across the whole transition.	Some of the schools were specific about who they employed to ensure cultural ‘safety’ and responsiveness was authentic.
Programme	The ability to adapt the class work to suit the needs of children and the group as a whole allows the opportunity to maximize ‘good’ sessions but importantly when the class is struggling for any reason, there is an ability to step into more supportive activities. Starting with activities that help build the socio-emotional language and self-regulation capabilities of children through play – building from the familiar where possible.	Teaching staff were upskilled in trauma sensitive schooling which included how to use language to achieve outcomes desired, early development, etc.	Main aim for whole school was to ensure staff were trauma sensitive or aware. That they felt supported to continue their learning around trauma and how best support learning for children who have experienced trauma.	Key areas of learning for both staff working directly and whole school include: Trauma and the impact on development, trauma sensitive schooling, Positive Behaviour for Learning,	Creative forms of therapy have been helpful for those schools involved. This includes play therapy, dance or music therapy and arts therapy – carried out by professionals who have expertise in the field.	A clear transition and safety plan should be created with input from both the teacher and teacher aide who have been working directly with the child, and the new teacher. Key to a successful transition will be ensuring the sense of safety is maintained throughout the transition. This may require a considerable amount of time prior to the physical transition where the child is introduced slowly to those that will be in their ‘new’ class.	Cultural responsiveness and safety was incorporated via a whole school approach the aim being to affirm cultural identity and strengthen a sense of belonging, which impacted positively on the sense of safety.

Pillar 1 - Safety

The sense of safety relates to physical, social, emotional and academic safety for a child. It is not by accident that safety is the first of the pillars mentioned. A perceived threat (real or not) has significant impacts on a children wellbeing, trust, and ability to engage and focus. A sense of safety provides a foundation for further development and learning, therefore it is core to ensuring children succeed in their education.

The safety pillar also involves the sense of safety felt by staff, family and whanau enabling them to engage fully and support the student appropriately.

Theory

Attachment Theory

British psychologist John Bowlby was the first attachment theorist. He described attachment as a "lasting psychological connectedness between human beings."² He observed that attachment was characterized by clear behavioural and motivation patterns. When children are frightened, they seek proximity from their primary caregiver in order to receive both comfort and care.³ The central idea behind attachment theory is that when primary caregivers are available and responsive to an infant's needs, the child can then develop a sense of security from which they can then explore the world, safely. The lack of secure attachments in early childhood can impact a child's behaviour negatively throughout childhood and life. Children who have disorders such as Oppositional Defiant Disorder, or Conduct Disorder for example, often have attachment issues. The experience of trauma in early childhood may have a significant impact on the ability for a child to form secure attachments.

This is attachment theory that sits behind the idea of creating a sense of safety for the children in the West 5: 4 Trauma classes. The theory being that in developing the sense of safety and a safe attachment to the teacher and teacher aide, a child is more able to explore their environment, relationships with their peers and their learning.

Trauma prevalence and the Impact of Trauma on Schooling

COVID and New Zealand's current economic climate have had a negative impact on many of our families. Police statistics in West Auckland suggest that over 6000 children are involved in Family Harm incidences each year, and many of them are in our schools. Trauma and the impacts of it are prevalent and reach a far greater proportion of our community than most would expect.

Research and studies in neurobiology, epigenetics and psychology suggest that trauma in childhood has a negative impact on a child's ability to concentrate, their language skills and development. This can then impact on a child's behaviour and ability to engage in academic study. When educators better understand the impacts of trauma on brain development, behaviour and cognitive abilities, they are better able to support children in their learning.⁴

West 5:4 Trauma Pilot: Safety

Place

For each of the schools involved in West 5: 4 Trauma their focus was to create a space for the children to be, to learn and to develop that promoted a sense of safety through belonging. In saying that each school took a slightly different approach in that they either created a separate space for the children involved or they included them in the mainstream classes but were mindful of how that class was staffed. Common across all schools was the focus on ensuring the children involved in W5:4T, the staff, and other children in the school were kept and felt safe.

² Bowlby J. *Attachment and Loss*. Basic Books.

³ <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-attachment-theory-2795337#toc-history-of-the-attachment-theory>

⁴ <https://traumasensitiveschools.org/trauma-and-learning/the-problem-impact/>

Separate Space

Two of the schools involved created separate spaces for the children. In both of these cases a dedicated class room was used – and in both cases the classes were set up specifically for the children. One had a more Early Childhood Centre/home feel with tables, kitchen facility and rest/quiet space. The other had new furniture and dedicated quiet space.

Both had small numbers of students so that they weren't overcrowded and there was plenty of space to accommodate the needs of children and importantly space for when one or more had a challenging time or 'kicked off' they and the rest of the children in the class had space.

In both instances the dedicated classroom was positioned within the school and among the other classes rather than on the edges or outside of the main school buildings. The rationale for this was to ensure that the students felt that they belonged to the school. For one school the children in the dedicated class had breaks at slightly different times from the rest of the school to start with, and then this changed as the year progressed. For the other school breaks were at the same time.

Mainstream Space

Several schools had introduced large hub classes – where there were a large number of children in one large space with multiple teaching staff. The children who were the focus of West 5: 4 Trauma were included in these mainstream classes and had dedicated teaching or teacher aide staff working with them. As the year progressed however it became apparent that this group of students needed to have a respite or quiet space, and for those that had not created that in the first instance, it became an important part of 'space' plan for the students.

Flexibility of Space

For all children the need for the right space at the right time became apparent. This meant providing quiet space for one or two children to retreat for respite when needed, using outside for times that energy levels were high, or the ability to retreat to an entirely other place was important. The key was to be aware of and respond to the needs of the child.

Consistency

Having consistency in the space was important for some. The need for the same people in the room at the same time, routine, and the expected helped in providing a sense of safety.

People

Staff working directly with the children

For all schools the people working directly with the children was vital. All described a need for that person to be passionate about these children and their needs, and to understand that any behavior or challenge was not personal, thus understanding context for the children was important. Secondly all reported that having a consistent team in the class was important. A teacher and teacher aide, and if relief was required, a regular relief person. Any new person added to the class created a sense of unrest.

Whole School

Key to the success of this programme in the commitment of the senior leadership team from the school to the work both directly with the children but across the whole school. This commitment provides the sense of safety for staff that they are supported, heard and when challenges arise are not alone. For some schools the introduction of the dedicated W5:4T made junior school staff feel heard. They had been struggling with the increased need and complexity of some of the children arriving as new entrants, and saw the introduction of W5:4T as an answer to their plea for support. This was also true for the community of schools participating in the W5:4T pilot. One of the major reasons behind their participation was not

only the need of the children, but the sense of community, belonging and safety they got from working with each other and sharing their challenges and learning with peers.

More widely it was important for all schools to have their who staff learn more about brain development and trauma in some way. A range of professional development opportunities were provided. The key commonality was that through more understanding of brain development and the impacts of trauma, the staff were better able to work with the children involved, and ensure a sense of stability for the children when they were not in their classroom.

Family and Whanau

The relationship with family and whanau was important in ensuring the transition into the W5:4T was understand and as smooth as possible. Relationships were developed through school leadership team and importantly through the main classroom teacher. One of the key ways the schools were able to build stronger relationships was by ensuring the families were heard and supported as well as much as practicably possible. For some that meant supporting the connection with other services or finding an advocate unrelated to the school that could support that parent or whanau members.

Programme

The work done with the students in W5:4T was often aimed at a much lower age than 5. This was due to the need for support and learning in some of the key skills that are more usually developed prior to the age of 5 – e.g. self-regulation, socio-emotional language and expression. Often games and play were used to support learning and prosocial development. (Over a period of time curriculum was introduced.) This play helped build connection and trust and therefore a sense of safety. In addition, flexibility of the programme was vital. This provided the ability to tailor the day to suit 'where the children were at' each day, or adapt to meet the needs of the group or individual children.

Pillar 2: Staff

In order to support children who have experienced trauma to engage in education the right people to be involved with the right skills base.

West 5:4 Trauma Pilot: Staff

People

Those working directly with the children – Recruitment and assigning staff - teachers and learner aides.

All schools in the research project assigned teachers from their existing staff to work directly with the children. There were key attributes described below that they were looking for, and knowing their staff well they felt comfortable that they had the resource from within their schools. The schools were also involved in a programme that saw learner aides recruited to support the school and teachers. This programme was in partnership with the Ministry for Social Development who supplemented salaries via a grant on the condition that those employed in the role were coming off either sole parent or job seekers benefit. Most schools were able to employ a member of their school community – a parent or relative with whom the school had an existing connection. The benefit of this was there was an existing relationship and knowledge of the school and its culture, and for the school an understanding of the Learner Aides strengths and offer to the classroom.

Learner Aide support for the teacher and the class is vital, as even with small numbers, it's a challenging role that requires at least two in the class at all times. This provides the ability to manage the group as a whole, and support individual children when needed. Some schools chose teacher aides that complimented the teacher in terms of gender or ethnic/cultural make up. However, all said that the attributes of the teacher aide were as important as those of the teachers.

As this was a new programme for all schools recruitment of the right teacher to work specifically with this cohort of children was vital. All schools spoke to the desire to have the following skills and attributes:

- Highly experienced teacher was preferred – providing an understanding of the school and learning context and experienced with a range of children.
- Understanding that the children's behavior or their reactions weren't 'personal'
- A passion for working with our most at risk children and someone who could genuinely connect with the children.
- And openness to learning and sharing learning.

Overall it helped if the other school staff knew and trusted the dedicated teacher. This supported the transition of students out of the W5:4T programme into mainstream class. The dedicated teacher could provide valuable learning and insights about the child to the mainstream teacher, and be support if any incidents occurred.

Consistency

Consistency is vital. Changes in staffing unsettled the children in the class considerably. This was also true when the main teacher or Learner Aide were not available. In order to support staff and avoid burn out, having additional team members work with the children on a regular basis who will also be the ones stepping in for the main team when needed can be helpful. This avoids 'strangers' and supports the maintenance of stability and calm with the group.

Training is important to further upskill the team working directly with the children as well as for a whole school approach. Another reason socializing key replacement staff can be helpful to support core staff having non-classroom time for professional development. In particular professional development and training around:

- o Trauma
- o Brain development
- o Attuned attachment

Pillar 3: Whole School

The ecosystem around the class and those within it also requires focus. This includes everyone from the leadership team, other staff in the school, the children, other experts and the community.

West 5:4 Trauma Pilot: Whole School (and community)

Place

School & Community

In this context place is considered more broadly via the schools role in the community. Understanding the community and the needs of that community helps a school better understand its students, the best way to engage with parents, caregivers and whanau. Understanding the broader

context of community and who is working in the community (government and NGO) informs what supports and services exist for the school, the students and the whanau. This is the role of senior leadership. That knowledge informs strategy and engagement.

The schools involved in the W5:4T Pilot while all from West Auckland did have some key differences that informed the supports, staff and funding they had available to them. One school was involved in providing education for children that had a disability and therefore had access to supports, funding and knowledge that they could draw on to enable them to better support the children involved in the W5:4T programme. Other schools had a significant number of Oranga Tamariki Care and Protection children attending which created its own challenges as transitions to other places were frequent and accessing information to enable better support of the children was sometimes challenging, or timeframes to embed supports was not long enough. This also impacted on the capacity of staff as the need across the school was significant.

People

Leadership team, whole school, and whanau.

Having the whole school on board for this kind of work is important. In order to do that effectively the school leadership team have an important role in communicating the need for the work and therefore dedication of resources, supporting strong and successful transitions for the students across the school in the coming years.

Some schools reflected that the introduction of the programme into the school made the junior teachers feel 'heard'. It was recognized that there was considerable effort required to support these children in their learning. For some this meant that others in the class were not getting the level of support they required, or the class as a whole was disrupted which impacted heavily on other students. For some teachers, particularly those that were relatively new to teaching, they identified a need for professional development and support to enable them to better manage these students, and support others.

Whole school 'buy in' meant greater commitment by staff to professional development opportunities in areas specific to the needs of this cohort of children – e.g. brain development, trauma sensitive schooling etc. It also enabled smoother and more successful transitions into other classrooms as the teachers in those classes had either improved knowledge and capability to work with the students and or felt supported by the school and senior leadership team.

Other children

Whole school buy in and commitment to 'trauma sensitive schooling' meant that staff were more conscious of modeling the behaviours and using the language they wanted all children in the school to use. This improved levels of acceptance and inclusion of students from the W5:4T by other students both in the playground and in other classes that they transitioned in to.

Programme

Communication

Key to this being successful is an effective communication strategy. Communicating prior to starting the rationale for engaging the programme and what that means for teachers across the school, celebrating and communicating the successes in a way that is inclusive of the whole school, and framing the 'failures' as learning experiences which are used to improve practice.

The staff across the school are also important in communicating to other children in the school with the key messages promoting belonging and inclusion of the children, as well as respect and empathy. This is a mix of direct communication, broader messaging around school values and modelling by all school staff.

For whanau it can be confronting to have your child selected to be part of this kind of programme or class. Therefore, communication with the whanau needs to be well thought through, supportive and inclusive. Where needed it helps if the school can also support the involvement of an independent advocate to help provide clarification and show that it is the best interests of the child that is the focus rather than any other agenda.

Training and Professional development

Pillar4: Professional Development

Place & People

All schools involved recognized the need for ongoing professional development both through offsite learning, but importantly through onsite learning. This means learning within the classroom and within the school. Some of this professional development was provided through peer support. Senior or dedicated W5:4T teachers working with teachers and staff from across the school in strategies for managing challenging behaviours, the use of language and promoting socio-emotional learning, etc.

Learner Aides employed to support this work were heavily involved in professional development both within their schools and within the trauma and brain development learning discussed below. In addition, they learned the soft skills required for engagement in employment. This was one of the key outcomes of the Ministry for Social Development funded Flexiwave programme that these Learner Aides were employed through.

People & Programme

Fundamental to this work however has been the professional development provided by Kathryn Berkett, a trauma specialist working with schools and education professionals in other regions. Kathryn Berkett is lead of Engage, an organization that specializes in neuroscience information. For the West 5: 4 Trauma project she delivered training on brain development and the impact of Trauma, and how to develop the sense of safety required for the learning environment needed for this cohort of children. (See Appendix C)

Pillar 5: Other Experts

Place

The location of these schools in the West of our largest city provides both pro's and con's in terms of accessing additional supports. On the positive side almost all agencies and services are available and located relatively closely to schools. This is not always the case for small urban or rural schools. However, these agencies and services are often over subscribed or lack the capacity required to provide the level of supports increasingly needed. In the Health Promoting Schools report in 2019 it was found that schools are in crisis when it comes to the mental health and wellbeing needs of students. Accessing services and supports from Marinoto Youth Mental Health services can take frustratingly long.

Access to the right supports and services for the children and their family/whanau is highly important. It is nearly impossible for a school to be able to provide all of the expertise required to effectively support these children.

What schools can do however is enable access to the supports and services needed. This can be done via advocating for the child and their family and or providing the location and time of day for access. This works particularly well when professionals come to the school to provide supports. We know also that when a child is excluded from school the access to supports and services drop away with that. They are 'out of the system' so to speak, and therefore it is far more difficult for both whanau to access to supports, or services to reach children.

People

For some children the barriers to engaging in education are greater than the school can address on their own. Involving expertise from outside the school (government agencies, organizations and services) can ensure the child and their whanau are getting the best possible support. These supports were accessed via pastoral care teams or leadership teams for some school, direct relationships with agencies and service providers

especially for those schools that had links into 'special school' resources and funding; or through the Managed Moves programme which was established in West Auckland to help address barriers to education, although primarily for secondary age.

In some of the schools outside support was provided in the form of specific programmes. Pause Breathe Smile, a mindfulness programme being introduced in schools across the country was used as a calming and focusing tool in the class and across the school. Methodist Mission Southern's Play 30 programme which uses every day childhood games to teach skills in self-regulation was trialed in Riroriro, and was more successful with those children with near age appropriate developmental levels.

Programme

Some schools were able to access specific therapy modalities to support the children in their develop and learning. Play therapy, Dance and Music therapy were very successful and all schools that were able to access these reported positive outcomes and believed they contributed to the development and success of children who engaged with them.

Education support was also provided via educational psychologists and expertise from Ministry of Education's Learning Support and RTLB service.

Pillar 6: Transitions

Place, People and Programme – Transitions IN to the W5:4T programme

One of the major learnings across all schools was the need for well planned and supported transitions into the W5:4T. From the very outset a plan that included communications with the whanau on the programme and rationale for including their child in the programme. Some parents found the idea of their child being singled out confronting, so the need for careful communication and management was required even before the child stepped foot in the class.

A cohort of children starting together creates its own set of challenges and staff need to be ready and well supported for the initial efforts required to manage even a small group of children who are often dysregulated and struggling with their sense of safety, being over sensitized, etc. The ability of staff working directly with the children to be flexible and focus on meeting and reading the needs of the group is a vital.

If a child was entering the programme/class after the cohort in the class or group already had started very careful integration was needed, as a 'new person' in their space created often a significant impact on behaviours, progress, sense of safety of the group. This was true whether it was a child or staff member.

Place, People and Programme – Transitions OUT of the W5:4T programme

To support transitions, the sense of safety was key. This was developed through a series of visits to the 'new' classroom or space so that the child could build familiarity and comfort. The number, length and frequency of visits was determined by the needs of the child in almost all cases. In all cases alongside the general 'whole school' professional development and learning, it was helpful to have the teacher who had been working directly with the W5:4T cohort spend time and support the 'mainstream' class teacher, and for them to provide advice and support even after the transition is complete was helpful. This enabled more successful transitions.

Pillar 7: Cultural Competency

Cultural competency was a focus for all of the schools involved. They had a range of ways of ensuring children, whanau and staff felt safe, included and a sense of belonging. For most schools tikanga was woven into their everyday practice from how they greeted each other and started each day, through to programmes that were run as part of their learning process in the school. For those schools that has a range of different cultural backgrounds there were a range of way so embracing the cultural diversity such as whanaungatanga Fridays where students and staff engage in cultural group time; celebration of various cultural language weeks and major celebration days. Some schools embedded the Te Whare Tapawha⁵ model into the school's practice and approach to learning. Essentially each school was unique and responded to the cultural needs of the students, their whanau and staff.

⁵ <https://www.birdwood.school.nz/te-puawaitanga-o-te-reo/>

Appendix A - Questions asked of the W5:4T schools across the research project

Leadership of school

- why did they choose to get involved?
- Describe their school community
- What else have they done up to joining W5:4T
- Did they have to convince others in the leadership team/BOT etc.
- What would you say to another leadership team about this work and why they should look at it?

Space

- Describe the space they have chosen and why
- How is it different to other classes / space?
- Did they have it already or have they created it specifically
- What is the rationale behind it?

Staff chosen

- What skills and attributes do you think are required for working with this cohort of children?
- Is there a priority list?
- Why have they chosen the person/people they have chosen.

Children involved

- Have they selected
- Why have they chosen the kids they have chosen?

Whole school

- What skills and attributes and knowledge do they think should exist in the school to enable this cohort to be successful throughout their school time?
- How have they gone about a whole school approach or what is their plan?

Other organizations

- Do they have active involvement of other orgs already if so how did that come about?
- Do they have an LSC

Community

- How do they communicate with their community (Families and broader community now)
- Do they intend on communicating about the programme/work to the community more broadly? If so how.

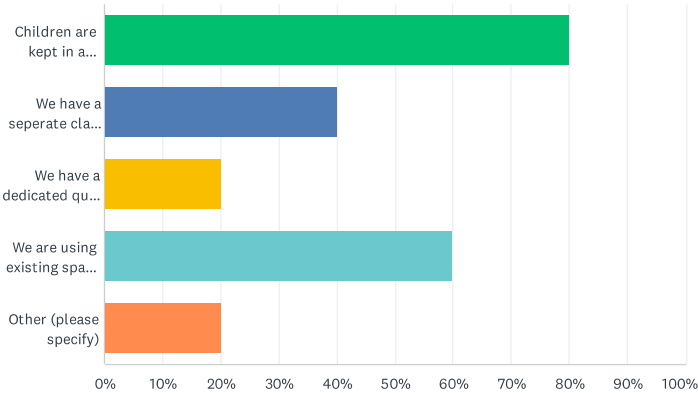
Appendix B: Survey Results

West 5: 4 Trauma mid year survey

SurveyMonkey

Q5 Tell us about the space/s you are using for your West 5: 4 Trauma work (direct work with the children) Tick as many as are relevant to your school.

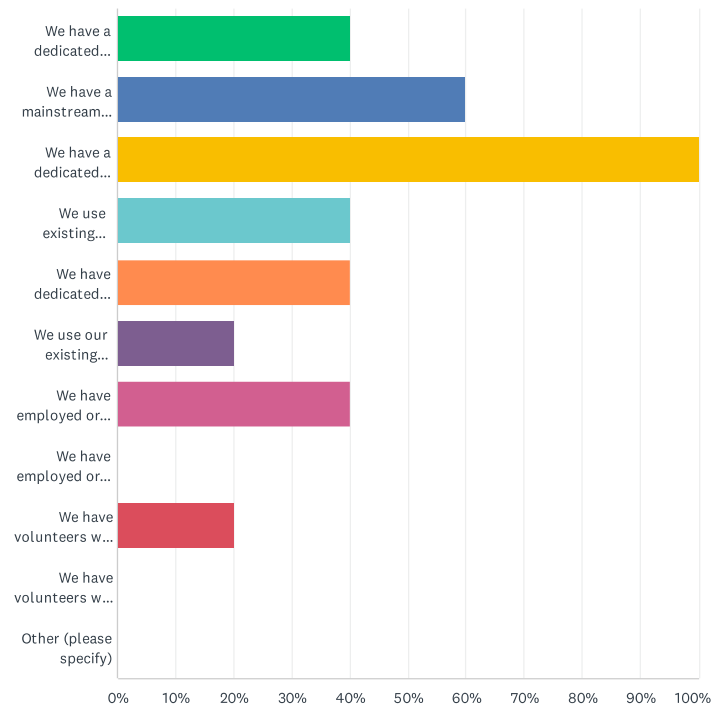
Answered: 5 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Children are kept in a mainstream class with other students most of the time.	80.00%	4
We have a seperate class or space that the children are in the most of the time.	40.00%	2
We have a dedicated quiet space that we use sometimes for the children.	20.00%	1
We are using existing spaces (like the library, someone's office, etc) for quiet time for these students.	60.00%	3
Other (please specify)	20.00%	1
Total Respondents: 5		

Q6 Tell us about the staff you use to work with these children. Tick as many as are relevant to your school

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0



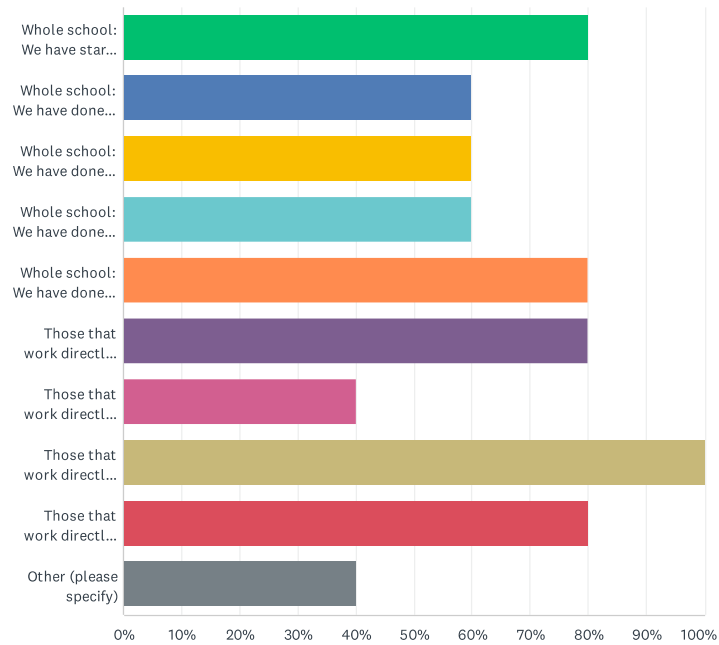
West 5: 4 Trauma mid year survey

SurveyMonkey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
We have a dedicated teacher for these children.	40.00%	2
We have a mainstream classroom teacher for these children	60.00%	3
We have a dedicated teacher aide/mentor/support person for these children.	100.00%	5
We use existing teacher aides and support staff, but they also work with other children in the school.	40.00%	2
We have dedicated pastoral care staff who work with these children.	40.00%	2
We use our existing pastoral care staff who work with these children and others from the school.	20.00%	1
We have employed or contracted outside people to come and work with these children specifically	40.00%	2
We have employed or contracted outside people to come and work with our school and they sometimes work with these children as well.	0.00%	0
We have volunteers who come in to the school and work specifically with these children.	20.00%	1
We have volunteers who come in to the school to work with all children in our school, and sometimes they work with these children.	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 5		

Q7 Tell us about the training or professional development your school staff and anyone working with the children have done as a result of having the West 5: 4 Trauma project in your school. Tick as many as are relevant.

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0

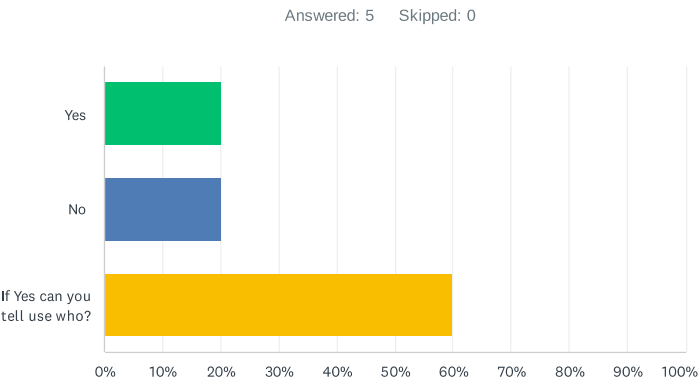


West 5: 4 Trauma mid year survey

SurveyMonkey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Whole school: We have started PB4L, or a new tier level in PB4L	80.00%	4
Whole school: We have done training on trauma	60.00%	3
Whole school: We have done training on brain development	60.00%	3
Whole school: We have done training on self regulation	60.00%	3
Whole school: We have done training on managing challenging behaviours	80.00%	4
Those that work directly these children: have done training on trauma	80.00%	4
Those that work directly these children: have done training on brain development	40.00%	2
Those that work directly these children: have done training on self regulation	100.00%	5
Those that work directly these children: have done training on managing challenging behaviours	80.00%	4
Other (please specify)	40.00%	2
Total Respondents: 5		

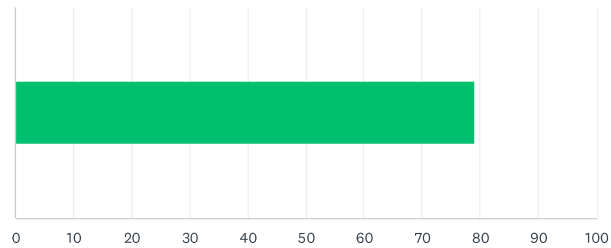
Q9 Have you engaged any support, services or help from any organisation or agency?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	20.00%	1
No	20.00%	1
If Yes can you tell use who?	60.00%	3
TOTAL		5

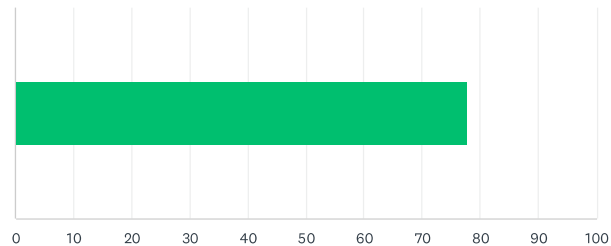
Q11 Thinking about how the children were at the beginning of the year:
What percentage of children involved in the programme have had an improvement in self regulation.

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0



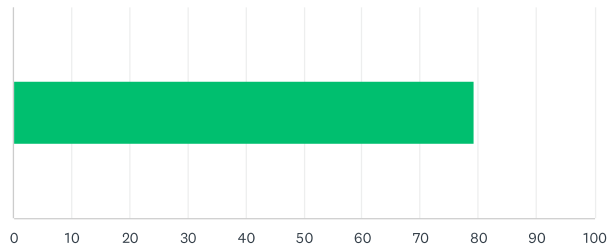
Q12 Thinking about how the children were at the beginning of the year:
What percentage of children involved in the programme have had a general improvement in their behaviour in the classroom overall.

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0



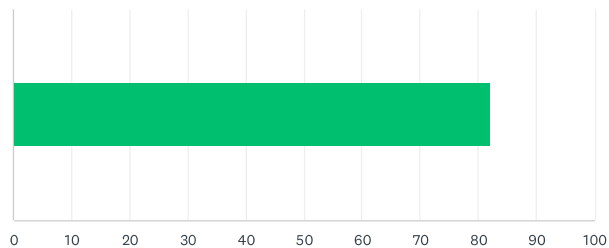
Q13 Thinking about how the children were at the beginning of the year:
What percentage of children involved in the programme have had a
general improvement in their behaviour in the playground overall.

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0



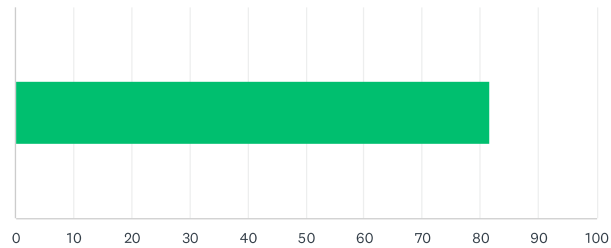
Q14 Thinking about how the children were at the beginning of the year:
What percentage of children involved in the programme have had an
improvement in their ability to engage in their learning.

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0



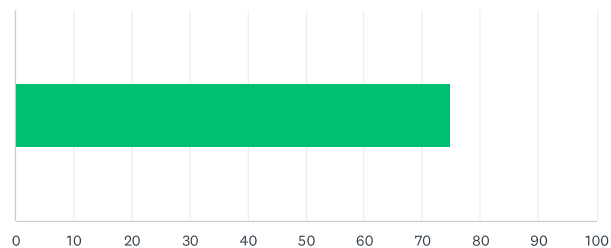
Q15 Thinking about how the children were at the beginning of the year:
What percentage of children involved in the programme have had an
improvement in their attendance at school

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0



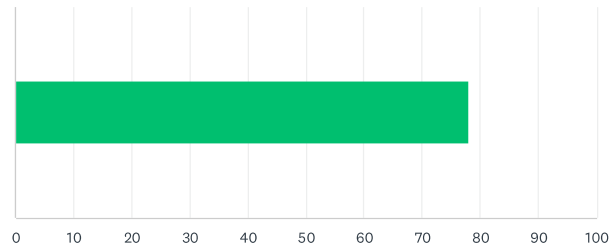
Q16 Thinking about how the children were at the beginning of the year:
What percentage of children involved in the programme have had made
progress in their academic learning or achievement?

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0



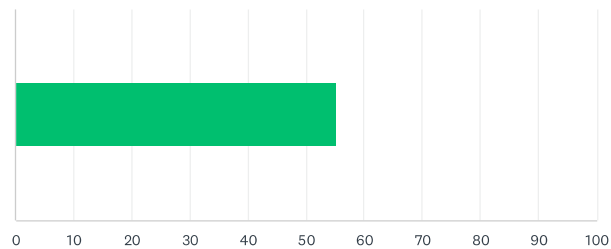
Q17 Thinking about how the children were at the beginning of the year:
What percentage of children involved in the programme have
had made new friendships with others in the school that they didn't have
before?

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0



Q18 What percentage of children from the West 5: 4 Trauma programme
have transitioned to a mainstream classroom?

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0



Appendix C: Engage Training

A series of videos presented by: **ENGAGE**
WORKS. GROWS. TALKS. HEALS.

Increasing Safety



Summary of Points
The main points you will hear in the video

From Points to Practice
Some thought ideas to help you translate into daily practice

For Reference
Easy Reference Space

Summary of Points

- ☐ Continuously ask yourself “What can I influence? What can’t I influence?”
- ☐ If we increase the sense of safety, this will (in most cases) result in less activations of the stress response
- ☐ If we increase the capacity to activate calm, this will result (in most cases) in less time spent in activated red brain
- ☐ Increased safety and increased capacity to activate calm will mean our tamariki spend more time in the Green Brain
- ☐ We need to be in the Green Brain to be able to appropriately observe, reflect and learn from our environment
- ☐ Over time, as we increase their capacity to

From Points to Practice

- ☐ After you have spent some time with your young person, take some time to consider what aspects of their environment you may have the capacity to influence, and what aspects you can’t.
- ☐ When you first meet your young person, take a note of ‘How Often and How Long’ they activate into the stress response (there is no exact way of noting this, do it in the best way for your young person and use the same measurement each time you check in about this young person)
- ☐ Remember you not the only people responsible for safety. Share your knowledge, and learn from others
- ☐ What do you think this individual needs to feel safe? Consider the main biological needs for feeling safe – feeling Seen, having a sense of Belonging, having Predictability, and enhancing the Mana of the young person. There may be other aspects that increase safety for them too. Only through observation of the individual will we truly know what makes THEM feel an increased sense of safety.

For Reference

Some – See me
Boys – Show me I Belong
Have – Tell me what is Happening
Mullets – Enhance my Mana

A series of videos presented by: **ENGAGE** 
MORE CONTROL | LESS IMPULSE

Increasing Capacity to Activate Calm



Summary of Points

The main points you will hear in the video



From Points to Practice

Some thought ideas to help you translate into daily practice



Further Links

Where you could go to find more information

Summary of Points

- ☐ We need to realise how important it is that our BODY physically practices activating to calm
- ☐ Emotional Resilience is the ability to activate our body and brain back to the state of calm
- ☐ One of the first games we play is 'peek-a-boo' which activates a moment of tolerable stress (when we hide), then activated to calm (when we 'return')
- ☐ By learning this activation at lower levels, we will increase the likelihood we can tolerate higher levels of stress activation later in life
- ☐ Many of our songs, stories and games are developed in order to practice this activation
- ☐ Use of devices is the first main environmental factor that could reduce the moments of tolerable stress
- ☐ Smaller whanau units are another environmental factor that can reduce moments of tolerable stress
- ☐ Change is going to take time, and will be dependent on the individual
- ☐ The most essential element of increasing safety and increasing capacity is a TRUSTING RELATIONSHIP

From Points to Practice

- ☐ What are some of the activities you could do with your tamariki to give their bodies the experience of activating to a tolerable level of stress activation, then back to calm? What would work for THEM?
 - ☐ Some potential examples are: board games; sports; art projects; lego; kapa haka; gardening etc
- ☐ If you know something about the early years of the individual you are supporting, do you believe they had enough opportunity to practice this activation to calm?
- ☐ After a certain amount of time (maybe one or two months, but sometimes you will see changes earlier, some times they will take longer) look back on your notes around How Often/How Long they activated when you first started. Now, How Often/How Long do you notice them activating? As long as the overall trend is getting less, then you are making a difference to their brains and their bodies.

Further links

- ☐ Bessel van der Kolk – The Body Keeps The Score (book)

Links to examples of training videos.

Red Brain/Green Brain

<https://www.engagetraining.co.nz/online-resources?wix-vod-video-id=62d5beca7c3842779005b2124f7299c8&wix-vod-comp-id=comp-koclo5h1>

Managing Behaviour

<https://www.engagetraining.co.nz/online-resources?wix-vod-video-id=5dafd9abd10449a18dbe38761c506698&wix-vod-comp-id=comp-koclnfrs>

<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-attachment-theory-2795337>

Bowlby J. Attachment and Loss. Basic Books.

<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-attachment-theory-2795337#toc-history-of-the-attachment-theory>

<https://traumasensitiveschools.org/trauma-and-learning/the-problem-impact/>

<https://traumasensitiveschools.org/trauma-and-learning/the-problem-prevalence/>

The Schools Involved

Fruitvale Primary School - <https://www.fruitvale.school.nz/>

Prospect Primary School - <http://www.prospect.school.nz/>

Lincoln Heights Primary School - <https://www.lincolnheights.school.nz/>

Sunnyvale Primary School - <https://sunnyvale.school.nz/>

Birdwood Primary School. <https://www.birdwood.school.nz/>

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Lottery Grants Board

Te Puna Tahua

LOTTO FUNDS FOR YOUR COMMUNITY