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Te Pānui o Literacy Waitākere

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Neuro-divergence as an Asset











Neurodiversity is the new buzz-word for the Ministry of Education. They have finally noticed that there is much diversity in the way brains are wired, meaning that education is not equal for all. They are starting to put in place programmes in schools for those who have not flourished under the current system, which is geared towards the neuro-typical and to Pakeha culture. Neuro-divergence just means some brains are wired a bit differently, and that can affect the way those individuals learn. People from different cultures also benefit from the opportunity to explore different ways of learning. This is something literacy providers have known for years. A huge proportion of our learners are neuro-divergent. They may have dyslexia (trouble with processing words), dyscalculia (trouble processing numbers) or dyspraxia (problems with movement, planning and action). They may have ADHD, be on the autism spectrum or just be very kinaesthetic (hands-on) learners. None of these brains are served well by

our school system. These learners come to Literacy Waitākere believing they are stupid, because they have been told so at school, when really it has been a case of teaching styles not matching their learning styles. They need an opportunity to find out how they learn.

One of the strengths of Literacy Waitākere is our team of experienced tutors who always accommodate the learner in front of them and provide a range of strategies to help them understand what works for them. We all have a blend of learning styles - read/write, audio, visual and kinaesthetic – and our tutors plan their sessions to the learning styles of their students. Our last newsletter talked about the way we use games and activities and how successful they can be as a learning tool because they meet the needs of a number of learning styles. Once learners have grasped what works for them, their learning takes off. Then we often see ‘tuakana/teina’ relationships emerging,

where those further down their learning path will mentor newer learners, giving them examples of things to try. Gradually learners begin to discover that the way they think might be an asset, a different ability rather than a dis-ability. Dyslexics are often great problem solvers, thinking outside the box. People on the autism spectrum can have great focus and attention to detail or extraordinary talents in areas like pattern recognition or maths. It's hugely rewarding for all involved to see learners blossoming as they learn to learn.

What is the best way to learn?

 Ears only	remember	
 Eyes only	remember	
 Ears and eyes	remember	
 Ears, eyes, discussion	remember	
 Ears, eyes, discussion, reproduction, use	remember	

Did you know?

- We commit to provide student-centred learning at no direct cost to the literacy learner.
- Learners are in control of their learning. They define their own goals, track their progress, and reassess their goals regularly.
- In many cases, new learners can start immediately and continue as long as they need to.
- We have groups at a range of levels to suit different skills.
- We match learners with others of a similar skill level.
- All our tutors are fully qualified Adult Literacy and Numeracy specialists.
- We welcome referrals from anyone in the community.



**Literacy
Waitākere**
Whāia te ara ako

Check our website for new pop-up programmes including computer and ESOL: www.literacywaitakere.org.nz

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Welcome to our New Manager

With the coming retirement of our long serving manager, Jane Gilmour, we are delighted to announce the appointment of Sue West to the role.

What's your background, Sue?

I've worked all my life in different aspects of education, including working with the Learning Network NZ (formally West Auckland Education Centre), Coastguard Boating Education, the Dairy Women's Network, The University of Auckland, Internet NZ, Budget Advisory Services and Skills Highway. I'm passionate about the power of life-long learning with a particular focus on adult second-chance learners and assisting them to re-engage with education.

I've also lived and worked in other countries, including Laos, Kiribati and an aboriginal community in the north west of Western Australia which has given me an interesting perspective on different cultures.

Most recently I was Executive Director of the 20/20 Trust which



focuses on digital inclusion – getting computers into homes and giving people the skills to use them.

What interested you about the manager role at Literacy Waitākere?

This position resonated with me for the following reasons; Te Tiriti o Waitangi is embedded in the Constitution, Literacy Waitākere has a strong staff culture and funding base. I share their passion and heart for adult learners and I can see opportunities for growth with the organisation.

Learners Say.....

Our first Well-being and Resilience course was a resounding success and the tutor reports already seeing positive changes in the lives of the learners who attended.

Their feedback was very affirmative.

"The course reminded me to 'grow the good'. It was factual about the ways that we can change our patterns. I found it realistic and science based, with great examples. I'm more aware of the things are good for me, but I hadn't realised they were helping me cope with stress."

"I've learnt what triggers me to get annoyed. This course has put me on the right track to deal with things in a different way."

"I've been savouring the positive moments in my life, noticing three good things each day. I've begun to notice my negativity bias, and I've got some really good tools to deal with it now."

"I didn't think it was possible to change my mind-set from negative to positive, but the course gave me step-by-step instructions. I've learned about what is going on in my brain

and body when I'm stressed. It doesn't mean there is something wrong with me. I've learnt ways to ground myself, to push the pause button, to recognize the good things around me. I can do meditation at home when I'm feeling anxious."

"I've finally accepted my stress and my behaviour because of my stress. I can accept it as a healthy part of my life. I'm not alone with my problems. Now that I am more aware of myself personally, I am more confident in making decisions in my life."