

Oranga Mokopuna Programme



Over 900 tamariki, their teachers and families are supported by healthy eating and fun activities thanks to the Oranga Mokopuna Programme. Since beginning in July 2015, the Tui Ora led programme has run in 22 early childhood centres (ECE's), kohanga reo and home based childcare throughout Taranaki.

It has helped enhance the skills and knowledge of 158 kaimahi (staff) and focuses on healthy kai, the benefits of breastfeeding, physical activity and the importance of active movement for under 5's. Teachers and educators are better equipped to spread the messages in their communities around the links between healthy brains and healthy bodies.

The programme works through three levels and at the completion of each level there is an incentive that supports the daily implementation of the key messages. This enables the transfer of knowledge into practical tools and projects such as vegetables, fruit plants and materials for gardens, new playground or activity equipment, or resources to help set up breastfeeding spaces.

Lead kaiako (teacher) June Hooker at Te Taura Here I Te Ao Kohanga Reo, says the programme has increased staff awareness of the stages of a child's brain development. "Talking to people who give you more information has been awesome because you can get isolated and start to doubt yourself. It's fantastic to have that professional development."

Funding for the completion of Level 1 allowed Te Taura Here I Te Ao to increase its range of play equipment. "The tamariki are so excited by it. I got out the bar equipment the other day and they wanted to go under it limbo style. They are inventing stuff to do all the time." The kohanga also planned to buy tools for its vegetable gardens to improve its ability to grow its own food.

Te Puawaitanga O Ngati Ruanui ECE in Hawera was inspired by a Heart Foundation cookbook and reviewed its menu when it became part of the programme, says their kaiako Tari Robinson. They provide three meals a day for their tamariki aged 0 – 5 years, and while they already had a nutrition policy strong on home cooked, low sugar foods this gave them extra information. "We used the cookbook to plan our whole menu making sure the tamariki were receiving a balanced diet. For us it is about seeing what else is out there and using those ideas to plan."

Funding also enabled the early childhood centre to introduce a swimming programme, as this need was identified by families. "This was in line with the active movement guidelines, and we could be creative about how we used it."

Fay Mulligan, the Oranga Mokopuna Programme team lead, says another spin off was ECE's and kohanga reo working together and celebrating events and activities.

During the programme the ECE's and kohanga reo reached Breastfeeding Welcome Here (BFWH) accreditation through the Taranaki District Health Board Public Health Unit (TDHB-PHU), and achievement of the Heart Foundations, Healthy Heart Award (HHA).

The programme is a collaboration between Tui Ora, Sport Taranaki, the Taranaki District Health Board Public Health Unit and the Heart Foundation. It is part of the Ministry of Health's programme to address maternal and infant physical activity and nutrition for addressing obesity in the developmental stages of life.



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