

Key Points for Funders

What is Writers in Schools?

For over 50 years, Read NZ Te Pou Muramura (Read NZ) has run the Writers in Schools programme, which aims to inspire children and teenagers to develop a love of reading and writing by bringing a writer or illustrator into their classroom.

Over 200 novelists, journalists, poets, playwrights, non-fiction writers, storytellers and illustrators are registered on the programme. As well as one-off classroom visits, the programme provides a range of options including creative writing workshops, literary tours, public events and book festivals. There is also an option for the visit to take place via Zoom.

In 2022, despite many schools being unable to book visits due to Covid-19 restrictions, 91 authors and illustrators made 302 visits to 265 primary, intermediate, and secondary schools throughout New Zealand.

Point and Associates evaluated the Writers in Schools programme, drawing on feedback from students, authors and illustrators and school staff including teachers, librarians and principals.



Why is the programme needed?

Reading for pleasure is one of the most important indicators for the future success of a child, improving literacy, learning, health and wellbeing and social outcomes. It is an even more powerful factor in children's life achievement than socio-economic background.

This work is required to improve the wellbeing of tamariki across Aotearoa, as well as boosting literacy achievement levels, encouraging participation in creativity, and addressing inequities in access to writing and arts.

What do school staff say?

School staff report that the visits are inspiring students and generating enthusiasm for and confidence in reading and writing. The literacy curriculum is being supported by showcasing writing and editing techniques, with the writers offering fresh perspectives and new approaches on the technical aspects of writing. Some schools are noticing the emergence of a reading community.

Following the visits there are queues at many of the school libraries, wait lists on books, and teachers are noticing a difference in the techniques students are using to tell their stories.

Teachers say the idea that writing involves pushing through challenges is perhaps one of the most important messages of the programme, particularly for struggling students.

This message of perseverance, editing, reviewing, "of writing and rewriting" is spilling into other areas of the curriculum.

School staff and authors believe the programme is exposing young people to stories and books from Aotearoa New Zealand, which is helping them to understand their history, culture, and support their identity.

What do students say?

The vast majority of students surveyed responded positively to the visit, saying they enjoyed it and it made them want to read not only the author's work, but others' stories too. The programme is making a difference to their reading and writing.

The diversity of stories and authors is helping to validate the diversity of students' experiences. Māori and Pasifika students, in particular, are seeing themselves in the stories, hearing positive and affirming cultural narratives. Students see the authors and illustrators as important role models, particularly children and young people who enjoy creative pursuits, or who face challenges in their lives.

This mirrors the results from international studies which show that Writers in Schools programmes can particularly impact students from diverse backgrounds, often under-represented in books and illustrations.

Also of particular interest has been the positive impact on reluctant readers, those with special educational needs, and those typically described as shy or non-participants by teachers.

"Who knew I was an actual storyteller? Not me. But one day it is going to be me up there." Student

The impact

Overall, the Writers in Schools programme is highly successful. This evaluation has found strong evidence that the programme is supporting authors, illustrators, school libraries and English departments, and of course the students themselves. For students, Writers in Schools supports the conditions which underpin storytelling, writing and reading for pleasure, and wellbeing.



Get involved

You can support Writers in Schools by

- Becoming a Read NZ member
- Funding school visits in a particular region or area
- Helping spread the word in person or online

Visit read-nz.org to learn more