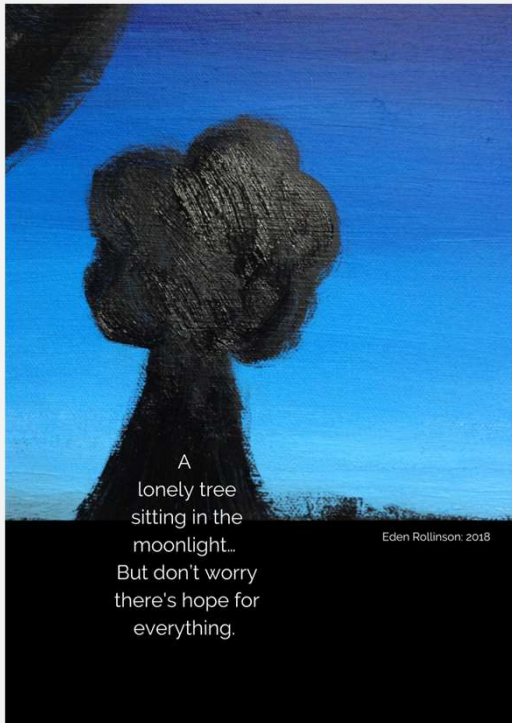


How do you significantly increase student writing outcomes in just 8 weeks?



Eden, Year 5 student,
Koputaroa Primary School, NZ

In all your years of teaching, have you ever seen this level of impact before?

**“Never.
Absolutely not.”**

*Becky Ward, Year 5 teacher,
Koputaroa Primary School*

Bringing purpose to writing

We asked:

- How do you take your students from reluctant, disengaged writers to children who request to stay in the classroom to write during break times?
- How do you empower teachers to effectively teach writing?

A case study into the impact of using LittleScribe! as a platform to improve literacy skills.

- How did a New Zealand-based teacher transform the writing outcomes for her class of disengaged, under-performing students and achieve a year's worth of writing progress in just 8 weeks?
- What happens when a class of 18 children and their teacher agree to 'Pencil Up'?



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Context

Becky Ward, Pod Leader and Year 5 teacher at the school, initiated the relationship with Littlescribe to target low achievement levels and address a lack of student engagement with writing.

Despite the school's implementation of a program aimed at increasing outcomes in writing across the school, assessment data showed that:

- 33% of students were achieving **below** expected curriculum levels
- 33% of students were achieving **above** expected curriculum levels

"Littlescribe has been an exceptional motivator for our children."
Becky Ward, Year 5 Teacher

Sources of Data

e-asTTle Writing Assessment Tool

<https://e-asttle.tki.org.nz/>

Students were assessed prior to the introduction of the Littlescribe platform and the writing project. New Zealand's Ministry of Education provides an online testing tool, e-asTTle writing, which is designed to assess students' progress in writing from Years 1-10. The tool provides reliable and valid assessment information for teachers and students to enhance teaching and learning. This supports the shift in understanding of best educational practice from an emphasis on assessment of learning to assessment for learning.

The process involved:

- A narrative writing pre-assessment
- A narrative writing post-assessment
- Feedback sessions with the teacher

School: Koputaroa Primary School
Location: Koputaroa, NZ
Type: Rural
Enrolment: Approx. 175 K-6
Vision: Nurturing confident, future focused learners

School background

Koputaroa School (est. 1891) is a rural school located approximately 7 km north of Levin in New Zealand's North Island. The school is a full primary, decile 6 school with a roll that fluctuates between 160 – 180, including approximately 24% of students who identify as Maori.

School deciles indicate the extent the school draws their students from low socio-economic communities. The lower the school's decile, the more funding it receives.

In a 2017 report on the school by the New Zealand government's Education Review Office, it was stated that:

"The school is developing its approach to supporting students whose learning and achievement need acceleration. In 2016, the school has reported that most students achieve in relation to the National Standards in reading, writing and mathematics. A significant number of students achieve above these standards.

Many Māori students achieve at or above National Standards in reading, writing and mathematics. There is yet to be equity of achievement with their non-Māori peers.

There is a lower achievement for Māori and boys reported across the areas of reading, writing and mathematics."



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All assessments were marked by the same teacher using the e-asTTle marking rubric. The data was entered to provide a detailed report. According to the New Zealand curriculum documents, students at this point of Year 5 should be at Curriculum Level 2A. Students are expected to **progress two curriculum sub-levels** over the Year 5 school year.

Self and Peer-Assessment

Students completed self and peer-assessments of their writing, and conferenced with Becky, their teacher, as to their next steps in writing.

Using Littlescribe!

Becky led her pod, consisting of herself and two other teachers, through the introduction of an eight-week writing program where students were provided with a purpose for their writing – to create a book, that would be published both digitally and in print and would be read by others.

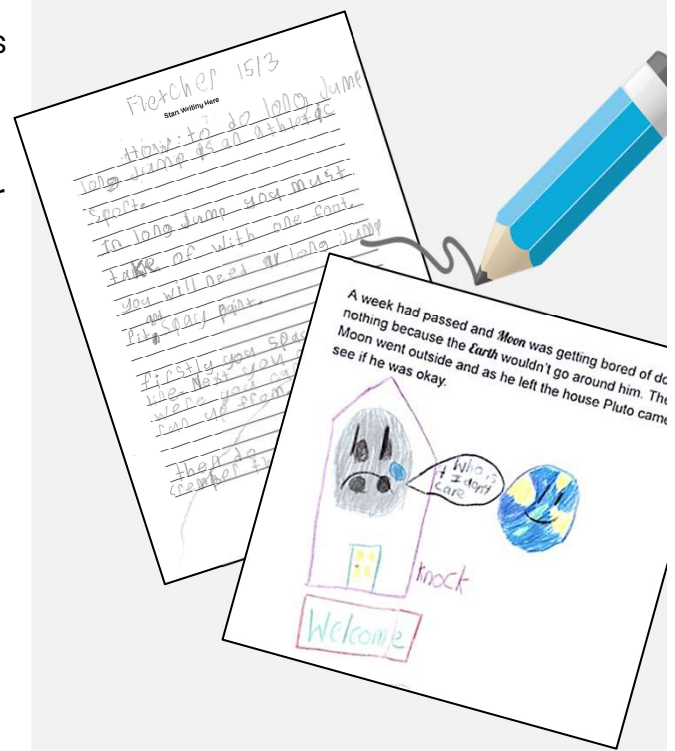
Becky guided her Year 5 class through the planning, drafting and writing of their own narrative. The students were given opportunities to read books written by other children using the Megabonkeramus Library and the Teacher Resources Library on the LittleScribe platform. They were able to evaluate the features of other books and apply aspects to their own work.

Creativity and imagination became a focus and an emphasis was placed on pride and progress rather than perfection. Students were told they were to become authors and they developed the skills needed to not only write their story, but to edit, proofread, peer and self-assess, seek and accept feedback, and make their book visually appealing to their audience.

These skills became as important to the teachers and students involved, as the curriculum content.

Specific content and skills addressed through the writing project, and assessed using the e-asTTle

Content	Skill Focus
Ideas	The relevance, quantity, quality, selection and elaboration of ideas for the topic.
Structure and language	The presence and development of structural and language features appropriate to the specified purpose.
Organisation	The organisation of ideas into a coherent text
Vocabulary	The range, precision and effectiveness of word choices appropriate to the topic.
Sentence structure	The quality, effectiveness and correctness of sentences.
Punctuation	The accurate use of sentence punctuation markers and the range and accuracy of other punctuation to aid understanding of the text and to enhance meaning.
Spelling	The difficulty of words used and the accuracy of the spelling.



Outcomes of the project

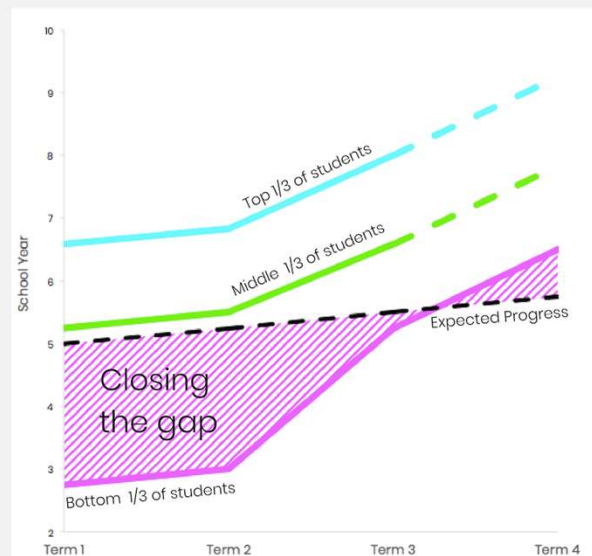
Child	Notes	e-asTTle Writing level before engaging with LittleScribe	e-asTTle Writing level after engaging with LittleScribe	Progress: Sublevels
1	Reluctant Writer SEN	1A	2P	+2
2	SEN - Family Trauma	1A	2P	+2
3		2A	3A	+3
4	SEN	1A	3A	+6
5	SEN	1A	2A	+3
6		2A	3A	+3
7	SEN	1A	3P	+5
8	SEN	2A	3B	+1
9		2A	3P	+2
10		3B	4B	+3
11	SEN	1A	2B	+1
12		3A	4A	+3
13		3P	4B	+2
14		3P	3A	+1
15	SEN - Family Trauma	2A	2A	0
16		3B	3P	+1
17		3A	4P	+2
18		2A	3P	+2

***SEN = Special Education Needs**

The data table shows the students' curriculum sub-level for writing, as measured using the e-asTTle assessment, immediately prior to starting the writing of their own narrative using LittleScribe as a motivator and a tool to become an author, and then again on completion of the 8-week project.

This data shows an accelerated rate of progress, in comparison to the expected growth of 2 curriculum sub-levels over the whole of Year 5. These results represent progress by students in all content and skill focus areas detailed above.

It was expected by Becky that there would be no measurable growth in achievement at the end of this 8-week period, particularly given that a number of these students have been involved in other writing intervention programs this year, providing little to no impact on student writing outcomes.



*Term 4 data has been verbally provided by Becky Ward. Formalised assessment data to be produced.



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- On average, students have progressed **2.3 curriculum sub-levels over this 8-week period – the growth that is expected for 12-months of teaching and learning.**
- Students who were achieving below expected outcomes have achieved close to or beyond the required level for Year 5, with one student achieving triple the anticipated year's growth. The gap is being closed by using LittleScribe!
- Students who were already achieving above expected outcomes have continued to make accelerated progress, with four students demonstrating results expected of a student in Year 8 or 9.
- A control class was used during this research. Their writing achievement was measured using the same assessment, however the students did not use the LittleScribe! platform techniques. The students in this class, on average, achieved a term's worth of progress – the expected growth.

Children were excited and motivated

"They were able to find a real purpose for their writing and knew that they had an instant audience. Regardless of children's prior attitude to, or ability in, writing, the children were excited and motivated to write, discuss writing and rework their initial attempts. In fact, we had children asking to stay inside and write during break times rather than go and play! LittleScribe continues to strongly motivate our children, providing them with opportunities to write in a variety of ways.

Firstly, it has engaged our children in a way no other approach to writing has been able to do. It has also provided an excellent, relevant source of writing exemplars that children / teachers can use to 'unpack' and improve their own work."



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22
22
Start Writing Here
what they
how to look after a fish after a
Fish are a water animal. fish
They can be big or small and
different types of fish.
Firstly: The es you will
need to have some food
*so they can live. Different
fish eat different types of
food.

1 year's progress in
just 8 weeks for Seth

heard "BANG!" The door
broke. He climbed on the
top. Then the elevator
fell two more meters.
It made a creak. "I'm
scared!" He whispered so
he got the rope and
tried to slide the string but
it didn't work because it
was blunt. Now he
gave up and used the scissors.
As he cut it it started

pencil Up!

So, what exactly has made the difference? Why has this worked and other writing intervention programs have had little to no impact previously?

"It's having a purpose. The kids just knowing that they're authors is so powerful. That's why I want to get the physical books into their hands too because I think that will motivate them on another level."

Becky Ward, October 2018

A positive shift for Koputaroa Primary School

Koputaroa Primary School has worked with Littlescribe to provide their students the opportunity to become authors of their own narrative. They have written their own original book, and some students have now gone on to explore the power of visual literacy and how one effective sentence can impact the reader. They have created posters and greeting cards showcasing their work. The realisation that their writing now has an audience, and will be revered, respected and read is so powerful and engaging, and as the data proves, has a dramatic impact on increasing student outcomes.

Student achievement has continued to progress beyond expected rates; the school has reported that the Year 6 class in Becky's pod, who also used the Littlescribe! platform, now has every child entering high school in January meeting the expected literacy standards. This was not anticipated to be the case prior to starting this project.

A positive shift has occurred in this school, in both the students' attitude to writing, and in the teachers' confidence in teaching writing, using quality resources, effective strategies and examples of real, original books written by children.

We need to make a difference

Nationally, our students' writing results have declined every year since 2011, so we need to support teachers to find exactly what makes the difference.

Writing is complicated and complex, and we need to provide students with a way to clarify what they're doing before they do it. When approaching this writing project, Becky guided her students through choosing a **topic** to write about, she gave them an **audience** for their work, a **purpose** in the form of books and greeting cards to have an impact on their audience, and she showed them **examples** of writing by other kids.

The mystery was removed and her students were able to more competently grapple with the complexity of writing.

“Topic: What exactly am I writing about?”

Audience: Who am I writing for—who wants or needs to know about this?

Purpose: What is this writing supposed to ‘do’? If I do it well, what will I notice? How should it affect my audience?

Examples: What examples or exemplary models exist that I can learn from and use to guide my own efforts?”

Source: ‘A Writing Strategy That Works for Every Student, Every Time’
Terry Heick, January 15, 2018



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Where to from here?

Students are invited to own their writing, which instantly empowers the young writers and increases the pride taken in their work. They are given a license to be creative, and a learning environment that is safe and honest.

The children in Becky's class have been set their next challenge... to write the stories and share their knowledge of their culture and country to teach others who are new to New Zealand. And to bring back words from their Maori language, by using them in their writing.

The United Nations has announced that 2019 will be the International Year of Indigenous Languages, in an effort to raise awareness of them, and to benefit both the people who speak these languages as well as for others to appreciate and celebrate in the richness of our world's cultural diversity.

According to their teacher, "the Maori language is dying", so these children are instantly engaged in the opportunity to write their language into their stories.

In return for accepting the challenge, we will find the students of Koputaroa an even bigger, Megabonkeramus audience for their work.

What impact will this have on their engagement and achievement?

"We are excited to be involved with LittleScribe! as it grows and evolves, providing our children with more meaningful ways to engage with literacy." Becky Ward

Pride

Purpose

Progress

'Bear Facts', a LittleScribe! book written by Zak, Age 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ was the inspiration that Becky Ward needed to realise she could make a difference to the writing outcomes achieved by her students.

Register Here

For 2019 Teacher Resources.

Includes LittleScribe writing process, reference books, videos, curriculum links and classroom resources.

A complete package.



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