

Kindergartens Celebrating Horowhenua's Pasifika Children

Taitoko Kindergarten in Levin is committed to young children. For several years the kindergarten was part of a parent support project supporting effective parenting, encouraging local children into kindergarten education and fostering connections between parents and community networks. *'It was a very successful project because it enabled our kindergarten to be developed as a community hub which gave parents, whanau and the community a physical space to meet, and also opportunities for teachers and whanau to develop trusting relationships in a supported environment where they can work together to support the child's learning journey. It also brought together a network now involved in a new initiative focused on encouraging Pasifika children into early childhood education'* (Head Teacher at Taitoko Caryll Resink).

Horowhenua has a growing Pasifika community, made up of mainly Samoan and Tongan families. *'Most are employed in the region's thriving horticultural industry and take their children to their work place, mainly because of language barriers and lack of knowledge around early childhood education'*.

Alongside other passionate community groups and educators (Horowhenua Principals Assn, Horowhenua Education Forum and Life to the Max) Levin kindergartens want to connect and strengthen relationships with Pasifika families to support children's ongoing learning. *'We have 4 kindergartens in Levin all of which aspire to support the wider community and build strong partnerships with families for the good of children's learning. This means actively supporting and fostering the languages, cultures and traditions of families in the community. It also seemed logical to do a joint project, whether it be schools, kindergartens, community networks – we are all trying to support the same families'*.

Known as the Horowhenua Pasifika Education Initiative, the group has achieved a significant step by securing a grant from the J.R. McKenzie Trust which supports community and education initiatives nationally. Next steps will be establishing a leadership group from the Pasifika community to work with the governance group and proposed liaison co-ordinators. *'We are really excited about the potential of the project and the support we have received so far from local government and education advisory groups. Our local community was identified by the trust as an area where there is a strong committed community approach to education beginning in early childhood.'*

For more information email Caryll on taitoko@wn-kindergarten.org.nz.

Note – Taitoko Kindergarten (along with Betty Montford, Cambridge Street and Parsons Avenue Kindergartens) is part of the Wellington Region Free Kindergarten Association.

