

AUT

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU



LitPLUS Pānui

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At LitPLUS we are very interested in the potential of communal reading or reading as a shared experience. When children are involved in communal reading, they build emotional and social connections that support their wellbeing. It affects how they feel about themselves, their health and the world in general. We learned this during our research on reading and children's wellbeing in the COVID-19 lockdown. Communal reading can look different in different situations. Sometimes it means reading the same book at the same time. Other times it simply means being in the same space while reading, or talking about what you've read afterwards. It can even mean caring about the characters in a story. However it happens, communal reading helps children grow and connect, as well as become more proficient as readers. Encouraging reading as a shared activity, rather than a solo one, is a powerful way to support children's development and resilience.



Associate Professor Ruth Boyask is currently presenting work on Communal Reading in Aotearoa and internationally. See the last page of this newsletter.

LitPLUS in action

Engaging Communities of Readers

Dr Ross Bernay and LitPLUS worked with Northcote Intermediate and Balmoral School in 2025 to create engaging community events that foster reading and writing. Each school designed its own special activity using ideas from LitPLUS research. Northcote held a book launch that showcased students' writing, while Balmoral created a vibrant book fair based on their survey of favourite genres. Families, students, and teachers came together to enjoy books and share positive reading experiences. Surveys showed that young people like choosing their own books and often read at home for fun. Both schools hope to continue these events and explore new ways to grow communities of readers.

In the news

You can hear directly from Ross Bernay on this recording from Radio New Zealand's Nine to Noon. Ross and LitPlus critical friend Libby Limbrick were talking about LitPlus's [evaluation](#) of the Storylines Story Tours.



Kawepūrongo



Balmoral's Best Books

[Read Here](#) Balmoral School's reflection on their communal reading activities.

LitPLUS researchers

Last year Dr Lisa Maurice-Takerei led an autoethnographic reflection for LitPlus researchers working together on children and young people's reading engagement.

[Read Here](#)

Studies in the history of reading

Dr Carol Neill presented her latest research at the History of Education Society UK Annual Conference in Winchester in November 2025. Her talk, "Perfectly poisoned by her reading," explored how the 1890 death of 16-year-old Emma Meurant opens a window on wider colonial anxieties about what girls were reading in nineteenth-century Aotearoa New Zealand. Drawing on newspapers, official reports, and school texts, she showed how girls' literacy was shaped by cultural expectations around gender and class, highlighting reading as a powerful site of social tension and negotiation. She'll be presenting more historical work on colonial reading groups in Tāmaki Makaurau in June.

LitPLUS News

SLANZA and National Library held a National conversation about the future of school libraries event in early November 2025. It included recent research by NZCER and exemplary practice from schools. SLANZA is leading important work in this space, building coalitions and promoting the continuance and development of school libraries. Associate Professor Ruth Boyask represented LitPLUS at this event, and looks forward to future research collaboration with SLANZA.

LitPLUS Morning Tea for collaborative kōrero Later in November LitPLUS hosted a morning tea for representatives from SLANZA, ALA, Literacy Aotearoa, PLNZ, Storylines Trust and some of our school collaborators. We were cooking up ideas for some new community-based research. Keep watching this space!

In 2026 more researchers joined the AUT LitPLUS research group. Check out our [webpages](#) to see the new faces. Dr Parisa Tadi also left to take up a new position at Southern Cross University in Australia, though still aims to work with us.

Upcoming Events and Opportunities

Conferences and Symposia Associate Professor Ruth Boyask is sharing LitPLUS research with people across the motu and overseas. In February she presented work on communal reading at AUT's Child and Youth Health Symposium, and will be taking this work to UKLA in Scotland in July. She's also joining a panel in Singapore to talk about material reading engagement with colleagues from Nanyang Technological University and the Singapore Ministry of Education.

The Education Hub Dr John Milne will be presenting LitPLUS research on Reading for Pleasure in a webinar in August 2026. He'll also be sharing insights from his own research on reader identity.

Postgraduate Research - LitPLUS is attracting new postgraduate researchers. If you'd like to undertake master's or doctoral literacy adjacent research within a vibrant, active and purposeful literacy community contact us at LitPLUS. *Noho ora mai ra.*

What LitPLUS is reading

Sue McDowell led NZCER's research on school libraries



School Libraries Research Project

In December 2023, SLANZA and the National Library's Services to Schools began this collaborative research project, with the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER). The...

[SLANZA SCHOOL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND AOTEAROA TE...](#)

Susan Sandretto and Rebecca Jesson deconstruct 'structured literacy'



Home / Archives / Vol. 33 (2025) / Science of Reading Policies: International Impacts and Impressions

"Why are you rushing this minister?" Imposing an Aotearoa New Zealand strain of the science of reading



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