

## Kia ora!

Hello, my name is Rachel Williams and I am teacher and researcher from the Woolf Fisher Centre at the University of Auckland. Last summer I created a digital blogging programme for students at three Manaiakalani cluster schools. The purpose of the programme was to provide our young people with an opportunity to practice their reading and writing over the holiday period. All too often our students leave school at the end of the year and don't practice their reading or writing very much over the summer holiday. When they return to school they struggle to remember what they learned the year before. To avoid this 'summer slide' or 'slump' in learning, I designed a fun and educational digital blogging programme called a *Summer Learning Journey*. The theme of the programme was travel and adventure. Students from Pt England, Tamaki Primary and Panmure Bridge schools logged onto the Summer Learning Journey site, learned about the people, customs and cultures in other countries, created learning outputs and then shared them on their blogs.

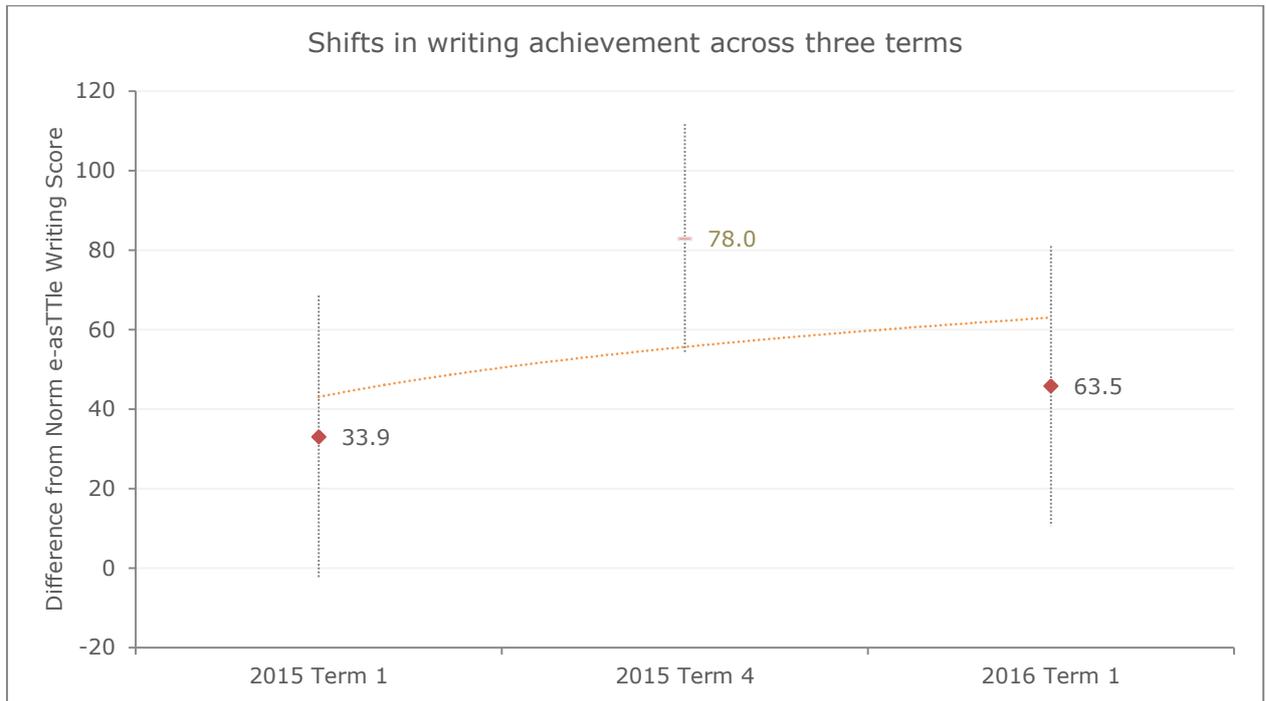
A total of 50 students registered for the holiday blogging programme and 23 actively posted their learning on their blogs. I monitored every blog and wrote comments in response to every post. I also recruited students from five countries around the world (Canada, England, Chile, Malaysia and Germany) to read the student's posts and comment on them. At the end of the summer our students had completed 261 posts and provided 43 comments on one another's blogs. I contributed a further 261 comments while the overseas bloggers provided 128 comments for a total of 693 posts and comments. Wow!

At the end of the summer holiday, I evaluated the quality and accuracy of all of the posts provided by our students. I also explored the impact that participating in the Summer Learning Journey programme had on the writing ability of our students. The results were really exciting! Not only did our students produce posts that had a high degree of fluency and accuracy (i.e. correct spelling, punctuation and grammar) but they also reported **significantly higher scores on their standardised (e-asTTle) writing tests** in Term I of this year, 2016 (after completing the programme) than they did in Term I of 2015 (see Graph 1). They also **performed significantly better on their e-asTTle writing tests in Term I of 2016 than matched control students** (students of the same age, ethnicity, school and gender as our participants) who did not participate in the programme (see Graph II). Finally, participants in the Summer Learning Journey did not experience the same slide in e-asTTle writing scores over the summer holiday period that the matched control students experienced. In fact, the **e-asTTle writing scores for participants dropped only slightly from the end of 2015 to the beginning of 2016 while the matched control students' scores fell significantly and dramatically** over the same period (see Graph II). This is really clear evidence that participation in the Summer Learning Journey programme had a significant, positive effect on the writing ability of the students!

On the basis of these great results, I have created a second version of the holiday blogging programme. It is called a *Winter Learning Journey* and it's going to be rolled out to all English, mainstream primary and intermediate schools in the Manaiakalani cluster in east Auckland this July. I'm really excited about it and can't wait to log on and blog with our students once again. If you would like more information about the programme or have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me, Rachel, on 09 623 8899 ext. 46437 or email me at [rachel.williamson@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:rachel.williamson@auckland.ac.nz).

Thank you and best wishes for a happy and healthy end to Term II!

**Graph I. E-asTTle test scores for Summer Learning Journey Participants over Three Consecutive Terms**



**Graph II. E-asTTle test scores for Summer Learning Journey Participants and Matched Control Students over Three Consecutive Terms**

