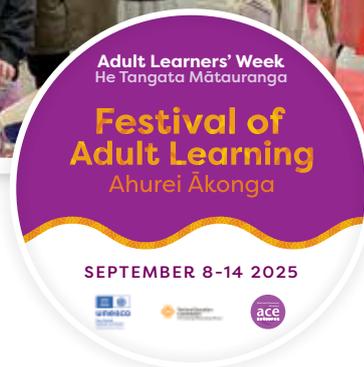


Adult & Community Education Newsletter



Adult Learners' Week He Tangata Mātauranga Festival

The pursuit of knowledge has the power to transform. Adult learning opens doors that many thought were closed—offering second chances, new pathways, and the confidence to step into unfamiliar territory. For individuals, it can mean improved job prospects, stronger connections to their communities, or simply the joy of mastering something new. For communities, adult learning builds resilience, reduces social isolation, and creates networks of support where lived experience is valued alongside formal

education. It recognises that learning doesn't stop at school gates—it is lifelong, life-wide, and life-deep.

This belief in the power of learning at every age is at the heart of Adult Learners' Week He Tangata Mātauranga Festival—an annual celebration that honours the achievements of adult learners and the dedication of the educators who walk alongside them. Held each September across the motu, the festival shines a light on the often-unseen stories of growth, and transformation happening

every day in community learning spaces. From small rural towns to urban centres, learners are gaining new skills, reclaiming their potential, and contributing to stronger, more connected communities.

This year the festival was held from September 8–14 with an eclectic range of events. Around 50 events took place across the motu. In this newsletter we have showcased a small sample of what was on offer during the festival week. We celebrate the depth and creativity of our sector and our community.

Celebrating the Unsung Heroes of ACE in Ōtautahi



Marina Taylor with Tai Samaeli

On 10 September, The Evil Genius in Ōtautahi Christchurch was the place to be, as the ACE sector came together to mark Adult Learners' Week He Tangata Mātauranga Festival in a fresh new way.

In past years, the Ōtautahi event has focused on celebrating learners and their achievements. This year, however, the spotlight shifted to the tutors – the dedicated and passionate educators who give so much of their time, energy, and knowledge to help others learn, grow, and succeed. The aptly named

event, “Nourish and Flourish,” was designed to honour the remarkable contribution tutors make to the sector.

Despite torrential rain and wind there was a great turn out as people came together to share kai and hear from special guest speaker Marina Taylor, founder of Amplifyyou and a highly regarded leadership coach. Marina describes herself as a Soul Advisor, Truth Teller, World-Class Hugger, Devourer of Books, and Empowered Life and Leadership Coach. A lifelong

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Whakatauki

*Waiho i te toipoto,
kaua i te toiroa.*

*Let us keep to the
closeness, not the
distance.*



*Members of the organising committee –
Jennifer Leahy & Robyn Peterson
(Hagley Learning)*

student of personal development and human potential, Marina, a Certified Professional and Clifton Strengths Coach, has spent years learning from people from all walks of life – collecting stories, gathering wisdom, and applying those insights in both her personal and professional journey.

Her passion for helping others discover their truth and calling was sparked during an executive coaching programme with one of New Zealand's leading coaches. That experience led her to establish Amplifyyou Ltd over 19 years ago, through which she continues to coach, inspire, amplify and empower individuals and teams to lead their best life.

On the night, Marina shared her gift for storytelling and her insights into leadership and personal growth through a series of interactive exercises that were designed to draw the group together in celebration of their skills and ended her nourishing talanoa by generously donating an Amplifyyou Strengths Discovery Coaching Package to the lucky winner Jo Day from Hagley College.

Marina left the group with three key take home tips.

Tip#1: Stocktake regularly to Flourish

Do a daily or weekly stocktake to help us maintain our mental and emotional, social, physical and spiritual wellbeing. We need to flourish from the inside out and a stocktake helps to identify the things in life that deplete us and the things that bring joy. Use these insights to shape our lives.

Tip#2: Flourish with your Strengths

Identify and keep a visible reminder of your strengths using a post it note, journal or note on your phone. Stand strong with them and apply them with intention daily to grow and develop.

Tip#3: Fill your cup and Flourish from the overflow

Commit to at least one regular cup filling ritual each week. If we don't fill our own cup, it is impossible to share the contents with those around us.

Guests left the event not just inspired but energised. Each tutor received a small gift as a memento, recognising their valued contribution to the ACE sector throughout the year.

Jennifer Leahy, Sector Services Manager for Ako Aotearoa's Southern Hub, summed up the spirit of the event:

"It was a fantastic night to celebrate our unsung heroes, who give their time at all hours of the day and night to help others grow and develop. Our community is richer because of their commitment and their desire to share skills and knowledge. When educators thrive so do our learners hence the title – nourish to flourish."

This year's collaborative event was organised by a small planning committee of Lottie Vinson (CWEA), Robyn Peterson (Hagley Learning), Bojana Rimbovska (Risingholme) and Jennifer Leahy (Ako Aotearoa) and emceed by Tai Samaeli.





Creative Expression, Connection, and Courage: Arts for Health Celebrates Adult Learners' Week

Arts for Health in Kirikiriroa Hamilton ran a vibrant and meaningful programme of activities during this year's Adult Learners' Week He Tangata Mātauranga Festival. The community-based organisation, which has been supporting the wellbeing of people through creative expression for nearly four decades, provides art classes and creative opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. Their kaupapa is grounded in the belief that creativity and artistic expression are powerful tools for enhancing wellbeing, building connection, and enabling people to discover and express themselves.

The organisation offers a wide range of art classes and creative workshops, open to everyone in the community. Their learners range in age from five years old to over 90. Some are vulnerable or disadvantaged, others are simply seeking creative outlets and connection—but all find a welcoming, inclusive, and inspiring environment at Arts for Health. Tutors are always on hand to support, guide, and empower learners to create their own unique works of art.

Participants are supported to explore a range of art forms, including painting, drawing, sculpture, and printmaking, as well as more specialised techniques in acrylics, watercolours, and mixed media. Art therapy and group art therapy sessions are also offered, creating safe and nurturing spaces for emotional exploration, healing, and

growth through creativity. The centre also offers a "Ladies' Day," a dedicated session for women to come together, connect, share stories, and make art in a relaxed, supportive setting.

The roots of Arts for Health go back 38 years to Waikato Hospital, where a group of doctor's wives began leaving art materials at patients' bedsides to support their recovery from surgery or injury. This action sparked what has now grown into a well-established and impactful community organisation. Today, Arts for Health operates as a creative wellbeing centre, welcoming more than 4,200 people through its doors each year—offering access to art, purpose, and belonging for just \$5 per session.

This year, during the Festival, Arts for Health celebrated with a powerful exhibition of learners' work titled *Brave Marks*. Opened on Friday 12 September and held in the organisation's in-house Corridor Gallery, the exhibition showcased around 15 artists, many of whom were exhibiting their work publicly for the first time. General Manager Cass Hendry describes the courage it takes to participate: "It's a huge step for people to put their work on show. It's scary and vulnerable—but it's also empowering. *Brave Marks* was all about breaking down barriers and giving people permission to express themselves. It's about finding your voice through art."

The exhibition ran for four weeks and attracted strong interest from the local community. Alongside *Brave Marks*, Arts for Health also hosted a special art critiquing afternoon, a unique opportunity for learners to gain professional feedback on their work in a safe and constructive environment. A professional artist facilitated the session, with learners bringing along a piece of their own work to be placed on an easel and discussed in front of the group. Fellow learners listened in, learned new perspectives, and gained insight into artistic language and techniques.

Cass explains that this process of critiquing is about much more than feedback—it's a critical step in helping artists develop confidence, deepen their understanding of their own work, and grow in both skill and self-awareness. "Critiquing opens up vulnerabilities, yes—but it also helps people to articulate the meaning behind their work. It encourages critical thinking, reflection, and confidence. These are all important for personal growth and for building strength in their artistic practice."

Feedback from learners and their whānau highlights the deep and lasting impact of Arts for Health's work. Parents and support people frequently speak about the transformation they witness in their loved ones. For many, Arts for Health provides a sense of

purpose, routine, and community that is hard to find elsewhere.

One parent shared how their family member, who typically sleeps until midday, is up early on the two days she attends Arts for Health. “She’s up, dressed, has had breakfast, and is out the door on time to catch the bus. It gives her something to look forward to. It gives her a reason to get up.” Another artist summed it up beautifully: “I just can’t stop thinking about my art.”

The environment at Arts for Health is described as welcoming, safe, and full of joy. People feel supported, heard, and valued for who they are. The creative process becomes more than just art—it becomes a pathway to connection, expression, and wellbeing.

Feedback on the exhibition was just as positive: Mere said “When I was asked to be part of this show, it was nerve-wracking. However, now that it’s up, it feels nice to have my art on display. It’s great seeing people look at my work and also getting to enjoy everyone else’s art”. Sandra commented that “It feels really good. At first, I didn’t know how to use acrylics, but now I’ve learnt new skills. I enjoy the community – there’s lots of laughter, fun, and good ideas. It feels nice to have my artwork up alongside everyone else’s, and to see all the different pieces. I just really enjoy being here today”.

Cass Hendry also expressed gratitude for the funding support

received from ACE Aotearoa, which made both the Brave Marks exhibition and the art critiquing event possible. “Without that support, neither event would have gone ahead. We are a small organisation doing big things—and this funding helps us continue to build strong, creative, and connected communities.”

Arts for Health is a living example of how adult community education can change lives—through creativity, compassion, and connection. Their celebration during Adult Learners Week| Festival of Learning was a testament to the courage of their learners, the commitment of their tutors, and the transformative power of the arts.



Learning, Connection, and Play – Playcentre NZ at the Festival of Learning



Playcentre New Zealand brought the joy of learning, community connection, and the magic of play to life during this year’s Adult Learners’ Week He Tangata Mātauranga Festival with a special Adult Learning Camp in the Waitākere Ranges. Over three days, from 12–14 September, around 35 parents and whānau from across the Auckland region – and a few from further afield – came together for a weekend of learning, sharing, and exploring new ideas about parenting and child development.

Playcentre is a uniquely Kiwi early childhood education organisation, with a history stretching back more than 80 years. Across the country, just under 400 Playcentres provide education and play experiences for children aged 0–6 years. Each year, around 14,500 children attend Playcentre, where the philosophy is simple yet powerful: parents are their children’s first and best teachers.



The model is parent-led. Families work together to run their centres, with adults actively engaged in their children's learning. Alongside this, Playcentre offers a structured adult education programme, enabling parents to gain skills, confidence, and formal qualifications in early childhood education – often sparking new career paths in teaching, education support, or community work.

For the Festival, Playcentre secured accommodation venues in the Waitākere Ranges to host their immersive Adult Learning Camp. The weekend was designed to blend familiar elements of Playcentre's nationally recognised training with the inspiration and freedom of the outdoors.

Indoor workshops mirrored the organisation's standard courses, covering topics such as how children learn through play, parents as first teachers, and building positive relationships. These sessions were popular with parents who had already started on their Playcentre learning journey, deepening their understanding and building on prior study.

The outdoor workshops offered something different – a hands-on introduction for parents new to Playcentre learning. Participants explored the treasures of the earth, discovered ways to use natural resources in play, and learned how nature-based activities can foster creativity, resilience, and curiosity in children. These sessions not only inspired new ideas for home and centre-based play but also introduced parents to the flexibility and creativity that underpin Playcentre's approach to education.

Kara Daly, Playcentre's Pedagogical Lead, said the ACE Aotearoa Festival grant was invaluable in making the event possible.

"We've already completed a similar weekend course in Tauranga at the end of May, which was very successful. Prior to COVID, we ran these types of taster courses quite regularly, and we're now just starting them back up again, they give

parents a chance to be lifelong learners."

Many parents involved in Playcentre were in full-time employment before their children were born. The training programmes offer them new growth opportunities post-children – building skills, gaining confidence, and often igniting a passion for teaching. Playcentre's adult education pathway includes face-to-face and online learning, with options ranging from short courses to the NZQA-recognised Level 4 Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Care. Last year alone, 167 parents graduated from Playcentre training.

While many Playcentre educators and volunteers also have other part-time or full-time roles, they remain committed to the Playcentre philosophy – providing the bulk of educators in the network's centres and keeping the parent-led model thriving.

As Kara notes, the benefits of the camp experience go far beyond the workshops:

"It's also about making connections between different Playcentres in the region. That helps with sharing resources, linking communities, and supporting each other. And with the outdoor courses, parents can access experiences that wouldn't normally be possible in a standard Playcentre environment."

The Festival was the perfect backdrop for this event – celebrating adult learning in all its forms and showcasing the way Playcentre weaves lifelong education into family life. Thanks to the support of ACE Aotearoa, Playcentre was able to extend this opportunity to more parent learners, strengthening not just their skills, but their networks and confidence as educators, caregivers, and community leaders.

In Playcentre's world, learning is never just for children – it's for the whole whānau. And as the parents who left the Waitākere Ranges that Sunday afternoon could tell you, sometimes the best classrooms have no walls at all.



Onehunga Adult Learning Centre Opens Its Doors for Adult Learners' Week He Tangata Mātauranga Festival

As part of the ACE Aotearoa Adult Learners' Week He Tangata Mātauranga Festival, Onehunga High School Adult Learning Centre held an Open Night on Thursday 11 September to showcase its wide range of courses and celebrate the achievements of both tutors and learners.

Each year, Onehunga High School Adult Learning reaches around 4,000 learners across three campuses—Onehunga High, Rosehill College, and Aorere College. With approximately 170 courses on offer, the centre caters to an impressive variety of interests. Director of Adult Learning, Lisa Clark, says the hands-on courses are currently the most in demand.

"Upholstery, woodworking, welding, painting—these are extremely popular," Lisa explains. "Much of it is about upcycling, but it's also about affordability and creativity. Japanese language is another standout—many people are travelling to Japan and can't access classes through schools, so they come to us."

The centre also runs a strong English as a Second Language (ESOL) programme with both day and evening classes. Beyond this, learners can explore cooking (Mediterranean, Asian, or Indian styles), fitness and wellbeing (yoga, Pilates, Bollywood dancing), or creative skills such as sewing, knitting, and crocheting.

The Open Night was a true community affair. Around 60–70 people

attended, with 15 tutors volunteering their time to demonstrate what makes their classes so special. Displays of student work filled the venue, a mini aromatherapy class was held, visitors were able to sample Malaysian food and the crowd was treated to a live Bollywood dance performance.

Lisa says the event had two main purposes: "We wanted to celebrate the incredible range of learning happening here—so that tutors, students, and the community could see and share in it—and we also wanted to encourage enrolments for next term. People are often surprised by the breadth of our courses, and our aim is to create some buzz ahead of Term 4."

For Lisa, who became Director of Adult Learning in January 2023, the move from secondary school teaching into adult and community education has been eye-opening.

"Our classes are far less formal. There are no tests or exams—students can come with clear goals and are deeply

engaged because they want to be here. The tutors shape their teaching around learners' interests, and that makes for a very dynamic programme. There's also a huge social element; people form friendships across ages and backgrounds, bonded by shared interests and the joy of learning."

The evening also included a special moment of recognition for long-standing members of the Onehunga High School Adult Learning whānau. Three tutors, each with more than twenty years of service, including Radha Ramachandra, Doug Bryan and Kim Daly, were acknowledged for their commitment, alongside three learners who continually enrol in classes term after term.

And it wasn't just the evening that was buzzing—earlier that day, the centre also teamed up with Onehunga Library to host a stand at the library's Adult Learners Expo, ensuring the Festival reached even further into the community.

Reflecting on the day, Lisa said, "It was a long day—but a great one."



Baking Connection: Whakatipu Mana Kai at the at the Adult Learners' Week He Tangata Mātauranga Festival



At this year's ACE Aotearoa Adult Learners' Week He Tangata Mātauranga Festival, food was more than just something to eat – it was a way of connecting, learning, and celebrating identity. Tai Wright and Christina van der Velde, founders of Whakatipu Mana Kai in West Auckland, brought their kaupapa to life by hosting a hands-on wānanga on how to make Rēwana Māori bread.

Whakatipu Mana Kai was born from Christina and Tai's shared vision: to grow the mana of kai. For Tai, who studied Māori food sovereignty at university, this work is about much more than cooking. It's about exploring the historical and cultural context of kai through whakapapa, identity, and connection to the land. "Food sovereignty is about more than being self-sufficient," he says. "Food sovereignty is the idea that communities and people should have the right and power to control their own food systems – from how food is grown, harvested, and distributed, to the cultural values and traditions that shape those practices in Aotearoa. It's about forming a different relationship with food and looking at it through a Te Ao Māori lens."

Before founding Whakatipu Mana Kai, Tai and Christina spent a month living solely on food they had harvested or gathered themselves. That experience kept them grounded in their community and inspired them to share their journey with others. They soon found that many people were hungry – not just for kai, but for knowledge, connection, and ways of living differently.

Tai's personal story also shaped this kaupapa. Growing up in Auckland, away from his whānau land, he often felt disconnected. But summers with his grandfather – learning how to go eeling and to lay a hāngī – planted the seeds of reconnection. Whakatipu Mana Kai is now a space where others can also reconnect with whakapapa, whenua, and each other through kai.

At the Festival event, held at Manutewhau Community Hub in West Harbour, ten participants gathered for four hours to knead, bake, and learn. They didn't just leave with a recipe for Rēwana bread – they left with stories of whakapapa, cultural history, and the shared warmth of baking together.

Christina says the real joy was in creating connections:

"Our focus was on food and baking, but really it's about growing relationships. Food creates identity and a sense of place. The skills people learned will go into their kete – something they can draw on in the future."

For Christina, who has always loved food and teaching, the wānanga was also about sparking confidence and creativity. "It's exciting to see something click for people," she says. "When they feel comfortable and confident, it's a real joy. Our wānanga are about well-being – because being connected to food and identity is essential for people to flourish."

Thanks to ACE Aotearoa's support, this free community event gave participants more than just bread-making skills. It offered a chance to celebrate adult learning, to strengthen connections, and to share in the joy of kai. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive with comments including:

"I really appreciate your making this workshop free to the community – you've given me a whole new perspective on food and connection,"

"What an awesome wānanga, I love what was covered/ contents. Delicious soup. Warm and lovely facilitators. Thank you both!"

As Tai and Christina remind us, food is not just something we eat – it is a pathway to identity, connection, and community.

Celebrating Lifelong Learning at Auckland Libraries



Auckland is home to the largest public library system in Australasia, with 56 libraries across the city. This year, twelve of those libraries proudly took part in Adult Learners' Week He Tangata Mātauranga Festival, celebrating the power of community, connection, and lifelong learning.

Auckland Libraries launched a new pilot video series, Ngā Tini Kōrero: Community Stories from our Libraries, during Adult Learners' Week, hosting an evening event at Te Pātaka Kōrero o Te Rewarewa – New Lynn Memorial Library to screen the series for the first time. The three short films highlight the stories of community groups whose literacy and lifelong learning journeys have been supported by Auckland Libraries:

- English Conversation Group – Every week, around 50 people who speak English as an additional language gather at the Central City Library to practise conversation in a welcoming, supportive setting, facilitated by community member C V R Shastry.
- Sign and Sing Group – A monthly session designed for members of the Deaf community and open to all, led by a librarian fluent in New Zealand Sign Language. Up to 15 adults regularly take part, and tamariki and their families often join in when passing through the library, adding to the inclusive spirit.
- Kēmu and Korero – An intergenerational Māori games group that brings together kaumātua

and rangatahi, including youth with disabilities, to share culture, learning, and community connection.

ACE Aotearoa CEO Hannah Pia Baral spoke at the launch, describing the videos as “an important showcase of adults participating in lifelong learning. The videos share a common theme of discovering the joy of learning, building friendships and finding a community and a sense of belonging. The library serves as a community hub and a welcoming space for everyone.

“Each year over 48 million items are issued by New Zealand public libraries with libraries being the most heavily used and highly valued community services provided by New Zealand local authorities. But libraries today are far more than repositories of books. Recent research shows that 48% of respondents expanded their study or learning opportunities through the library. The magic happens when libraries and the adult and community education sector work together,” said Hannah.

Behind the scenes, the Whānau Learning team (within the Libraries Public Engagement team) has been supporting Auckland Libraries' involvement in Adult Learners' Week He Tangata Mātauranga Festival. Their team's focus is lifelong learning and literacy at Auckland Libraries, guided by their new Literacy Plan and evidence-based practice and research. The team supports local library teams to design and deliver community education programmes, identifies opportunities for professional development for

frontline staff, and establishes strategic partnerships with literacy and learning providers, including Literacy Aotearoa and the Digital Inclusion Alliance Aotearoa (DIAA). Over the past year, their community libraries have hosted digital skills classes, creative writing workshops, poetry groups, and wellbeing courses – all aimed at giving people meaningful opportunities to learn, connect, and grow. The Whānau Learning team is very much in a support role with much of the mahi completed at a local level within the community libraries.

During the Festival, each participating library added its own flavour to the celebration:

- Glen Eden Library ran daily digital drop-in sessions, helping people gain confidence with email and technology.
- Mount Albert Library embraced the season with a spring gardening workshop on planting and growing food.
- Birkenhead Library hosted both a Mahjong “Game On” session and a creative zine making workshop.
- Botany Library provided several courses including wellbeing through aromatherapy, introducing people to the power of scent, a Pathways Awarua introduction on the range of courses available and an introduction to the tech available at Auckland libraries.
- Onehunga Library provided the opportunity for people to drop in and meet with local learning providers.

Our people

Christine Philpott

(02/03/1952–18/08/2025)

We were very sorry to hear the news of the passing of Christine Philpott on 18 August. Christine has been a member of the ACE community since 1991 when she joined Hillmorton High School as a teacher ACE Coordinator, Adult Student Liaison Tutor and Teacher of School to Transition. This followed a very successful career as a secondary school teacher where she taught at Ashburton College and Chisnallwood Intermediate before moving to Hillmorton High School where she remained until her retirement.

Despite her busy teaching and administrative load Christine always had time for others and for extras. She was very involved in The Rowley Resource Centre, a local community centre where she served on the Board of Management for several years. She also participated fully in associated professional groups often holding office and providing professional leadership – CLASS, ACE Aotearoa and Home Economics and Technical Teachers Association.

In her early days with ACE she worked with a close knit group to provide the best outcomes for learners across the city. There was a very high level of trust and co-operation and a willingness to share information and resources. Christine took that shared commitment through her career and will be remembered as a dedicated teacher of ACE in Christchurch. Our thoughts are with her whānau at this time.

Christine Herzog

(26/07/1952–28/08/2025)

The ACE community sadly lost another committed and dedicated contributor to adult education with the passing of Christine Herzog in August. In the mid 1970's Christine arrived in New Zealand from America on a two-year scholarship. She started her career in Aotearoa in 1977 as a planner for the Grey Lynn area but her real passion was for supporting equity through treaty training. She was a tireless advocate for social justice and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Christine was involved with the establishment of bicultural programmes at MIT where she established their Treaty Education Unit. In the 1980's she became involved in TAWA the then women's trade training programme. Christine was also a founding member of Auckland's Project Waitangi (Tāmaki Treaty Workers – a network of groups and individuals in Tāmaki-makau-rau who affirm Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the basis for the future of Aotearoa) and she also taught at the Auckland Workers Educational Association (AWEA). Through Christine's involvement with AWEA she supported many causes and individuals in pursuit of lifelong and adult learning. Our thoughts are with her whānau and friends at this time.



- Titirangi Library partnered with Titirangi Community House to host a session on creating a memoir your way with participants introduced to techniques on how to create a living memoir on any topic. They also ran an older driver's refresher session with the support of Waka Kotahi.
- Te Manawa at Westgate had a focus on all things digital for the week.
- Glenfield Library hosted and Adult Learners Open day.
- East Coast Bays Library played host to their weekly session with Digital Seniors volunteers, a non-profit organisation that provides free tech support so people can better understand and use their digital devices.
- Waiheke Library ran a course on coding for adult learners.

Reflecting on the success, Alexis McCullough, the Whānau Learning Specialist, who is managing and nurturing the partnership with ACE Aotearoa, said: "It was an amazing opportunity across Auckland for people to take part in a wide range of events. Hopefully, it gives them a taste of what's on offer and encourages more people to pick up, renew, or begin their lifelong learning journey."

The Adult Learner's Week Festival once again showed that when libraries, communities, and ACE Aotearoa come together, learning is not just about skills – it's about connection, wellbeing, and building strong, thriving communities.

Watch Ngā Tini Kōrero: Community Stories from our Libraries at the Auckland Libraries' YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/aucklandlibraries>

Breaking Down Barriers: Adult Community Education for the Deaf Community



Every day across Aotearoa New Zealand, hearing people engage in a constant flow of incidental learning—the kind of knowledge we pick up without even thinking about it. It's in the small talk with friends, the chatter on the radio, a quick news segment on television, or the overheard conversation in a café. For many Deaf New Zealanders, however, these everyday learning moments are far less accessible. Without access to sound, much of this “background education” simply doesn't happen.

For many within the Deaf community, information needs to be delivered directly, intentionally, and in New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL). This means adult community education (ACE) becomes more than just a learning opportunity—it becomes a lifeline to knowledge, independence and participation.

Deaf Aotearoa, the national organisation advocating for and supporting Deaf people, is bridging this gap by providing a full range of adult learning courses designed specifically for the Deaf community. Some programmes are adapted from mainstream ACE courses, while others are uniquely developed to meet Deaf learners' cultural and communication needs.

This year, Deaf adults across the country had the choice of around 65 ACE courses offered through Deaf Aotearoa, covering everything from life skills and health education to leadership development and digital literacy.

Many Deaf adults have experienced inconsistent or incomplete access to education, often leading to language deprivation. This can have lasting effects on communication, literacy, and confidence.

Lara Draper, General Manager – Adults & Seniors at Deaf

Aotearoa, emphasises the channels they have in place to ensure Deaf people have access to ACE. “Our adult community education courses are designed to provide cultural context, ensuring information is shared in a way that makes sense for our learners and reflects our community's values.

“This tailoring is more than a teaching strategy—it's a commitment to equity. Courses are matched to each learner's abilities, needs, and goals, recognising that a one-size-fits-all approach simply doesn't work in ACE for the Deaf community.”

Deaf Aotearoa's courses cover a wide spectrum. Some examples include:

- **Deaf Yoga Workshops** – In October, Deaf Aotearoa Christchurch is hosting yoga sessions led by Deaf yoga teacher Irene Hulab from Australia. Delivered in a fully inclusive NZSL environment, these workshops focus on stress relief, emotional balance, and better sleep—skills that connect directly to overall wellbeing.
- **Deaf Leadership Skills Development** – In August, Christchurch participants took part in a two-part leadership course. The first session explored self-reflection and growth as a leader; the second focused on empowering Deaf leaders to effectively manage communication with hearing people through interpreters.

Sometimes, courses arise directly from community need.

Lara recalls one example:

When a much-loved community member passed away from cancer, the loss prompted deep conversations in the Deaf community. People began asking: Do I have a will? What happens at a funeral? What would cancer mean for me and my family?

For hearing people, these answers often come from conversations, public talks, or media coverage—none of which are easily accessible to Deaf people. In response, Deaf Aotearoa created a workshop explaining cancer, funeral planning, and will preparation in NZSL.

“Government websites may have the information,” Lara says, “but without sign language, it’s not accessible to our community. We try to fill that gap.”

Another example is their Avoiding Online Scams course, teaching digital safety and fraud prevention. While many people learn about scams from TV news or newspaper articles, such sources remain out of reach for most Deaf New Zealanders without dedicated NZSL resources.

Deaf Aotearoa courses are not just about the content—they’re about the environment. Deaf learners are highly

social learners, thriving in community spaces where face-to-face, visual communication is the norm.

For many, the Deaf Club is more than a venue; it’s a second home where learning and teaching flow naturally between members. As academic research on Deaf Culture and bilingual-bicultural education shows, learning in culturally and linguistically affirming spaces significantly increases both knowledge retention and learner confidence.

Lara believes there’s still work to be done to make adult learning truly inclusive:

“Many course providers think about accessibility for disabled people generally, but they don’t always consider the specific requirements of the Deaf community, for example, by providing NZSL interpreters. It’s important to notice that sometimes

teaching in a hearing way isn’t enough—you need to adapt content and delivery, so it works for Deaf learners.”

She hopes more ACE providers will collaborate with Deaf Aotearoa to make mainstream courses available in NZSL, creating more equal opportunities for Deaf adults to participate.

In addition to delivering courses, Deaf Aotearoa also invests in developing Deaf tutors and facilitators. The Deaf Leadership Workshop in Christchurch is one example, equipping participants with the skills to run their own classes. Similarly, their dementia awareness course is taught by Deaf presenters, ensuring knowledge is shared within the community’s own cultural framework.

This approach builds what Lara calls a “Deaf ecosystem,” where learning is mutual, and teaching comes from within.

Although NZSL has been an official language of New Zealand since 2006, there remains a shortage of resources and funding for Deaf-focused learning across many life-skill areas. Deaf Aotearoa’s ACE programmes help fill that gap—providing access to education that is culturally relevant, linguistically accessible, and empowering.

In the words of one learner:

“Here, I can ask questions, understand everything in my own language, and feel confident. That makes me want to learn more.”

For the Deaf community, learning is not just about gaining skills—it’s about connection, identity, and having equal access to the knowledge that shapes our daily lives.



To access a NZSL translation of this story please scan the QR code or visit



https://youtube.com/S5YZh1dFVcA?si=6NLprgSFBdxY_IKH

Peter-Clinton Isaac Foese Elected President of ASPBAE

At the 9th General Assembly of the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE), held in Vietnam in December 2024, Peter-Clinton Isaac Foese was elected President of the organisation. His appointment marks a significant honour for Aotearoa New Zealand, placing a respected voice from our adult and community education (ACE) sector at the helm of a key international body.

Many across the ACE community will recognise Peter's longstanding contribution to the sector. His journey with ASPBAE began over thirteen years ago, after attending his first ACE Aotearoa hui in 2012 alongside Analiese Robertson. Reflecting on that formative experience, Peter shares:

"Analiese encouraged me to attend a workshop, and I found her and the discussion extraordinary and inspiring. Soon after, I was nominated for the ASPBAE Basic Leadership Development Course in Myanmar in 2013, where the focus was on the youth constituency. That experience led to the development of the ASPBAE Youth Declaration. Since then, I've been a committed supporter of ASPBAE and ACE. Learning from others in diverse spaces including sustainable development, youth participation, civics education, and indigenous pedagogy broadened my horizons and inspired me to seek out opportunities for shared learning and to advocate for community education."

Peter brings to the role a deep commitment to equality, equity, and education as a fundamental right which underpins all other rights. He says ASPBAE's mission to expand access to quality education and promote lifelong learning aligns closely with his own philosophy:

"ASPBAE represents an international community of learners and educators grounded in flax-roots mātauranga,



Peter is pictured here with whānau at the General Assembly, left to right: Catherine, Janet, Loto (Peters Mum) Peter and sister Daphne.

tikanga, and the principles of authentic participation and justice. It fosters solidarity and mutual understanding, especially in the face of the complex global challenges we all share. There is strength in standing together."

Peter believes Aotearoa has a unique and vital role to play in this global movement. Drawing on examples such as Te Whiti and Tohu Kākahi, Kate Sheppard and Sir Edmund Hillary, he notes that while New Zealand is small, its impact can be profound. Te Tiriti o Waitangi, he says, provides a distinctive lens through which we can approach international education solutions.

A proud Samoan, Peter also brings the cultural value of Tautua—service—to his presidency.

"Tautua means selfless service to the village, servant leadership with and for others, upholding the principles of integrity, reciprocity, and responsibility. This value is central to how I lead and support the ASPBAE community."

In his new role, Peter emphasises the

importance of listening, learning, and enabling ASPBAE's team—particularly the Secretary General Helen Dabu and staff—to deliver on the shared goals of ASPBAE's membership.

"I want to be a servant leader like those before me, providing responsible and supportive governance. Many of ASPBAE's member communities are among the world's most marginalised—especially indigenous peoples, women, disabled peoples, and youth. Our work is not to speak for them or decide what the solutions are but to stand beside them, amplify their voices their stories, in solidarity in their advocacy."

Family remains central to Peter's journey. His aiga travelled to Vietnam to celebrate his appointment, and he credits their support, especially mum Loto Foese-Aiolupo, as foundational to his commitment to community education.

Looking ahead, Peter sees education as more critical than ever.

"In an era dominated by

misinformation, artificial intelligence, conflict and emergencies, and polarising ideologies, education is our compass. It cultivates critical thinking, builds resilience, and creates space for genuine human connection. The ACE sector and ASPBAE offer powerful platforms for collective learning and action. At a time when many feel isolated, these networks help restore a sense of connection and shared purpose.”

Peter-Clintons family is from the villages of Faleula and Vailoa Faleata in Samoa; he is a first-generation Samoan kiwi, born and raised in Pito-one, Te Awakairangi, Whanganui-a-tara. Through faith in Jesus Christ and lived experience of 18 years working as a youth and community worker, he advocates that no challenge or issue is insurmountable when we support individuals, aiga, and communities to have self-determination built on education and love. He thanks his parents for role-modelling servant leadership at home and in the community, and is inspired everyday by tamariki, rangatahi and whānau that he journeys with to positive change in their communities. He currently works at Mana Mokopuna the Children's and Young Peoples' Commission as the Manager of Participation and Engagement Team.

International: ASPBAE Learning and Acting Together with its Members and Partners: For a Peaceful, Inclusive, Gender-Just and Climate-Ready Future for All

Helen Dabu, Secretary-General, Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE)



Brief Background:

ASPBAE and its Formidable Ties with ACE Aotearoa

Founded in 1964 in Sydney, Australia, the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) is a distinguished, long-standing education regional network of 251 civil society organisations and individuals across 30 countries in the Asia Pacific region. It has consistently worked towards securing the right of all to basic, youth, and adult learning and education of good quality, contributing to poverty eradication, social justice, gender equality, sustainable development and a lasting peace.

In its 61+ years of existence, ASPBAE has fostered a wide network of civil society organisations – community-based groups, national-level Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and federations of education organisations, national campaign coalitions, academics and rights activists. These have been mobilised through platforms of cross-country exchange and learning to strengthen capacities in education good practice. ASPBAE has engaged thousands of adult educators and education advocates in numerous country-level and cross-country training, conferences, workshops, study visits, research, manuals and publications. These have covered a wide range of concerns, reflecting the diversity of the Asia Pacific context: for example, adult and women's literacy, migrants' education, gender equality, sustainable development, citizenship education, technical vocational education and training, and peace education.

While recognising the solid contributions of NGOs in education provision, ASPBAE has always maintained that governments are primarily responsible for securing the right to education and lifelong learning. ASPBAE has thus staunchly pursued advocacy work, promoting the adoption of effective education policies and programmes, backed by strong public financing. These efforts are supported by sound research, informed by rich education practices and collectively shaped by ASPBAE's membership.

In pursuing its decades of work, ASPBAE has strongly worked with and leveraged the deep experience of **Adult and Community Education (ACE) Aotearoa**, which has now assumed the ASPBAE Presidency, represented by **Peter Clinton Isaac Foese**, for the period 2025–2028. This ACE leadership in ASPBAE was formalized during ASPBAE's 9th General Assembly in 2024 and was part of ASPBAE's regional strategic planning workshop and 60th Anniversary celebration culminating event in Da Nang, Vietnam on 25–28 November 2024.

Looking Ahead:

Reading the latest threats and the critical role of ASPBAE and its members and partners in defending and harnessing the power of education in these turbulent and unprecedented times.

ASPBAE's work in advancing a transformative education agenda within and beyond the Asia Pacific region through strengthened policies, financing and enhanced practice will remain a



core part of its strategic directions, in close collaboration with its partners and members, including ACE Aotearoa.

In pursuing the work along these areas in the coming period, especially within the term of ACE Presidency in ASPBAE, attention should be exerted on the complex and intersecting contextual underpinnings for education.

Emerging contextual shifts and shocks are pointing to the following directions which will need to be accounted for in ASPBAE's strategies for education in the coming period:

1) Reshaping of the Global Order, Risks of Wars, Emergencies and Crises – Intensifying Threats to the Sustainable Development Agenda with Barely Six Years Left to 2030.

The existing international rules-based order negotiated after the last world war which has helped preserve key principles of human rights and fundamental freedoms will be tested to its limits against ultra-nationalist and transactional tendencies of new power blocks of countries.

With barely six years left to the Agenda 2030 and the diminishing outlook for global-led processes and agreements, spheres of influence and engagements might lie more in regional and sub-regional blocs and processes, and will need to be harnessed further to continue demanding accountability for human rights and overall development agenda, including commitments to education. At the same time, it is still important to continue engaging in spaces at the global level to influence and collaborate with other development sectors, and monitor how the emerging world order will further impact education and development.

2) Dramatic cuts in aid to education and development in favour of increases in defence spending and inward-looking domestic agenda of developed countries.

The ripple effect of USAID's closure and the recent pronouncements of European governments in re-arming and increasing their defence spending will be felt in the medium to long-term at the cost of development aid, climate commitments and social cohesion agenda both at the national and transnational levels.

Fighting for financing of education and development will be more critical now than ever. ASPBAE, together with its members and partners, will need to build on its earlier efforts to challenge regression in education budgets and financing.

It will need to continue challenging the growing influence of the private sector in education delivery and policy processes, especially when public financing and development aid are diminishing and the acceleration of technology allow for growing influence of private, for-profit technology companies. It will also need to continue strengthening its advocacy work towards greater domestic resources for education, especially calling for a more progressive tax systems that will pass on the tax burden to the richest population and companies and eliminate existing tax loopholes that allow for their tax breaks and incentives.

3) Rapid changes brought about by technology and AI in education, development and all life spheres.

With growing human dependencies on technology, including the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI), much power and influence now lies more in the private sector. Unfortunately, policy developments and regulatory actions of governments are not catching up and failing to reinforce human-centred, regulatory, and protective mechanisms to both reap the benefits and minimise the risks posed by technology and AI.

ASPBAE will deepen its capacities and advocacy efforts on this front. It will continue to call attention to existing digital divides and hold governments to account on their responsibility to fully deliver the right of all to good quality education and not allow private sector holders of technology to undermine this right.

As recommended by its members, ASPBAE will promote the development of digital skills for women and marginalised communities to enhance their life skills, including market-competitive skills, bridge the gap in formal labour force participation, address the gender pay gap and promote economic empowerment for the most marginalised groups.

4) The rise of far-right and conservative/nationalist governments, and the regression on commitments to human rights, peace, freedoms, social and gender justice, equity and inclusion and climate justice.

There is certainly a chilling and shocking effect when a global power like the United States blatantly sets aside commitments to rights, freedoms and fundamental principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, as well as gender, social and climate justice.

Board Talk

Nevertheless, within the international community, there remains a stronger solidarity to protect long-held principles of human rights, justice and equality. Further, the wider social movements for education and development, including ASPBAE and its national, regional and global partners, will still persist and hold steady now more than ever, even amidst the threats of diminishing funding for civil society work. Existing intergovernmental policy spaces where ASPBAE and its members and partners are present will need to be defended, while also scrutinising parallel spaces that undermine a more representative process of engagement.

As the culture of divisiveness grows and is fuelled by the advances in digitalisation and wide range of technological platforms, ASPBAE will work closely with its partners and members, including ACE Aotearoa, in developing spaces for intergenerational and cross-sectoral discussions through learning collaborations, communities of practice and “think tanks”, to protect a transformative education agenda. It will also work with its members and partners, in challenging the far-right discourse and powerfully assert its analysis in advancing human rights, respect for diversity, the principles of equity, inclusion, as well as gender, social and climate justice.

There is no doubt that the complex and challenging social, economic, environmental and political contexts all point to the importance of protecting the right of all to good quality education as key in developing and implementing strategies for the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies that support children, youth and adults to cope with current and future challenges.

ASPBAE will be at the frontline in confronting these contextual underpinnings, sustained by its strong work with partners and members like ACE Aotearoa.

At this year’s ACE Aotearoa AGM Jay Rupapera was reappointed as Tangata Whenua Co-Chair for a further two year period and Edmond Fehoko was appointed Tangata Tiriti Co-Chair. In our next issue of the newsletter, we will share an interview with our Co-Chairs and we will also acknowledge longstanding board member Kathryn Hazelwood, who was the previous Tangata Tiriti Co-Chair, and who completed her term on the board this year.

Three new members were elected to the board. We are delighted to introduce you to Dr Will Flavell, Heidi Renata and Charmaine Tukua. They join Lottie Vinson, David Do, Edmond Fehoko, Jay Rupapera and Anne Troy. We took the opportunity to have a chat with the new board members about their history in the Ace sector and what they hope to achieve.

Dr Will Flavell

Will has served on the Literacy Waitākere Board for ten years. With a background as a secondary school teacher, he has seen firsthand how reading and writing are critical skills for navigating society successfully. He is passionate about creating second-chance learning opportunities for people who didn’t get a healthy start.

A key reason for putting his name forward for the Board was to be a voice for those who are often left out of the education system, especially rangatahi, Māori, and Pasifika communities. Will believes education is the key to our future, and we must ensure that all voices are heard at the decision-making table. He also had some strong persuasion from friend Pale Sauni.

In terms of goals to achieve during his term on the Board, Will wants to progress three key things:

1. Enhance support for Māori and Pasifika learners.
2. Champion second-chance education and create equitable learning pathways for everyone.
3. Advocate for policies that make a genuine difference in the lives of our adult learners

Will calls himself a forever learner who has been studying Gagana Sāmoa for many years, which he says helps him be more culturally responsive to our Samoan communities.



Heidi Renata

Heidi says ACE has always been about more than education for her. It is about discovering potential and creating spaces where people feel seen, valued, and capable of more than they imagined. She believes lifelong learning should be available to everyone, no matter their age, background, or postcode. That means removing barriers to access, keeping delivery and outcomes simple, and ensuring people feel welcome to start, and confident to continue. She says learning should be relevant to the world we live in now while preparing people for the future.

Through INNOV8HQ and a range of other initiatives, Heidi has spent the past decade working alongside communities across Aotearoa and internationally to co-design learning experiences that blend cultural identity with practical, future-focused tools. A key part of this work is creating opportunities for the exchange of cultures and perspectives, enriching learning through diverse worldviews and expanding understanding beyond our own borders.



She says she has had the privilege of collaborating with and mentoring thousands of individuals and businesses in this mahi, and every interaction has left her enriched by the unique personalities, experiences, and strengths that shape each environment.

For Heidi, joining the ACE Aotearoa Board is about service and strategy. She wants to bring a Māori wahine lens, a future-focused approach, and a community-led mindset to the table. "ACE has such a powerful role in shaping opportunities for lifelong learning in Aotearoa, and I see my role as helping to amplify voices, break down barriers, and ensure we're building systems that truly serve our diverse communities."

In terms of goals to achieve during her term on the Board, Heidi wants to progress three key things:

1. Championing equity of access – ensuring that learning opportunities are available to all communities, including those in rural, remote, and underserved areas.
2. Integrating future-focused skills – supporting ACE to lead in areas such as digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and ethical technology.
3. Honouring diverse knowledge systems – recognising mātauranga Māori and cultural intelligence as core strengths in every learning environment.

In summary, Heidi believes learning is more than a classroom experience – it's a community experience. "As future tūpuna, we have a responsibility to leave behind systems that are more inclusive, more connected, and more inspiring than we found them."

Charmaine Tukua

Charmaine has been in the ACE sector as an educator since 1998 where she first started with the Te Reo Māori night classes run from Risingholme, Cashmere High School, Christchurch Girls' High School and Riccarton High School. From there she moved to CPIT (now Ara) where she taught in the Te Reo Māori me Ōna Tikanga ACE programmes, offered through Te Mātauranga Māori under Humanities. Today, she continues to teach in the Te Reo Māori programmes at Ara offered through Te Puna Wānaka.

Charmaine believes ACE Aotearoa plays a vital role in creating inclusive, transformative pathways for adult learners and as a board member she brings expertise in:

- Te Tiriti-based governance and kaupapa Māori education
- Cultural capability development and systems change
- Vocational and community education strategy
- Advocacy for learner equity and staff wellbeing

With over 34 years of experience in Māori adult education, community development, and cultural capability facilitation, and a work and life grounded in Te Ao Māori, Charmaine was keen to participate in the board when asked if she would be interested in joining. Charmaine stresses her commitment to restoring mana and equity in education through kaupapa Māori frameworks.

Charmaine says she has a commitment to serve with integrity, humility, and vision to ensure adult and community education remains accessible, relational, and empowering for all. She will continue to advocate for systems that uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi, empower underserved communities, and embed cultural practices that nourish identity, belonging, and wairuatanga.



Noticeboard

Stay up with the Play!

Membership of ACE Aotearoa offers significant benefits. You have access to our carefully curated and well-thought-through suite of courses that are ACE focused. You receive regular updates on the sector and initiatives that are changing the way we work; you can attend the annual ACE conference and your support helps us to deliver the advocacy and policy advice that keeps our sector strong. The cost of membership is extremely affordable and your support enables us to support you. You might also want to share membership benefits with other organisations and encourage them to join our movement.

To join please visit our website <https://www.aceaotearoa.org.nz/who-we-are/membership>

Upcoming Courses

Enhance your skills and engage with the community by undertaking a course in Term 4.

ACE Aotearoa has several courses coming up next term for educators and tutors. You can see the range of courses available and register for these on our website:

<https://www.aceaotearoa.org.nz/what-we-do>