

talking matters

Language-rich Environment workshops in Te Tai Tokerau

Partnership report
June 2025



SELO workshops
funded by
Ministry of Education

The workshops at a glance

Workshop description

Talking Matters Language-Rich environment workshops in Te Tai Tokerau were designed as sessions for teachers and playgroup educators to access bite-sized, applicable knowledge and to bring more intentionality around responsive interactions to their every-day practice.

Reach and context

Forty six kaiako (early-childhood teachers/educators) from four Northland hubs took part in the Talking Matters Language-rich Environment workshops in May 2025. We have subsequently delivered a workshop to parents at Maungaturoto Primary on the creating rich language environments at home. This invitation came from a participant at the Waipu workshop.

Attendance and survey response breakdown

Whangārei	15	14
Dargaville	13	12
Kerikeri	13	9
Waipū	5	5
	46	40



What we improved

The main outcome of the sessions was an increase in knowledge and confidence, which was our realistic aim for the one day hui.

To understand what shifted, we used a simple pre-post survey to measure change in all workshops where we asked teachers three questions before and after the session:

1. I am aware of the science linking responsive interactions to child brain development
2. I have effective strategies to support rich, early oral language in practice
3. I know how & where to access tools & resources to support rich early language in my practice

The workshops drove significant improvement in all three areas.

Knowledge area	Pre-workshop (average / 5 → %)	Post-workshop (average / 5 → %)	Change
Knowledge about responsive interactions and brain development	3.25 / 5 → 65 %	4.40 / 5 → 88 %	 23%
Effective strategies for rich oral language	3.16 / 5 → 63 %	4.40 / 5 → 88 %	 25%
Knowing where to find tools & resources	2.91 / 5 → 58 %	4.36 / 5 → 87 %	 29%

After each workshop, we also asked kaiako about the relevance and usability of the content we shared

100%



Said the workshop was relevant to their practice

(84 % Totally, 16 % Quite a bit).

96%



found the content easy to understand

(84 % Totally, 12 % Quite a bit).

“

A key part of the workshop is doing some myth-busting. We didn't realise how many myths we had to bust. There is still a strong belief that children become confused if they are exposed to more than one language. It was great to be able to talk about this in relation to brain science and the things to look out for as children switch from one language to another.

Sacha Cherrington, Facilitator

Relevance and usability

When we facilitate these sessions with kaiako we know there is always a wealth of knowledge in the room and that, in part some of what we share may come as a reminder, or an affirmation of what they already know. It is also important to us to honour teachers' time and make sure they can take away some new learning they can apply and share with others.

In these workshops we struck a good balance between affirmed knowledge and new learning, with most teachers finding the content immediately applicable and anticipating they will share it with whānau and colleagues.

Question	Average (/ 5)	As % of scale
The workshop affirmed my existing knowledge about language development	4.20 / 5	84%
I learned something new in the workshop	4.32 / 5	86%
I can use what I learned to promote rich early language in my practice, straight away	4.68 / 5	94%
I will share what I learned with colleagues and whānau	4.72 / 5	94%



“

Teachers found the simple activities and ideas helpful. All are aware of Kowhiti Whakapae but the information doesn't provide simple actions or teaching strategies. The Language Actions were something that all could try the next day at their service.

Sacha Cherrington, Facilitator

Reporting to the SELO contract

SELO contract – intended outcome	Evidence from the workshop report
Increased ability to make the best of each space for interactions	Knowledge about responsive interactions and brain development rose from 3.25 / 5 (65 %) to 4.40 / 5 (88 %), showing kaiako gained knowledge about how to use their spaces more effectively for responsive interactions.
Increased intentionality to use resources that are relevant to the home cultures and languages of tamariki	The largest shift was in “knowing where to find tools & resources” – up 2.91 → 4.36 / 5 (58 % → 87 %).
Increased intentionality to use a diverse array of resources to increase responsive interactions	Post-survey ratings show 94 % of kaiako felt they could use what they learned straight away and 94 % intended to share the ideas with colleagues and whānau, indicating readiness to draw on the resources and strategies shared.
Increased intentionality and ability to set up and improve the physical environment of the centre to create and enhance opportunities for responsive interactions	Although we did not ask directly about physical environments, the gains in knowledge and available strategies, suggest that the teachers are better equipped to be more intentional across all aspects of their language environment.
Increased knowledge about how the physical environment can enhance opportunities for responsive interactions and communication development	As above
Outcome statement: Strengthening teaching and learner capability, through an enriched language environment and ensuring equitable access to communication for all tamariki	Teacher’s capability (both in knowledge and practical strategies increased). This, combined with high applicability scores suggests the workshops have strengthened teaching capability around language, which will contribute to equitable access to responsive interactions for tamariki.

Note about the data used in this report:

These figures are drawn from the 40 kaiako who completed the workshop surveys across the four Te Tai Tokerau hubs.

Ratings are based on how participants felt immediately after the workshop; they are not a direct measure of changes in classroom behaviour.

Averaging method: We report simple (unweighted) means on a five-point Likert scale, then express those means as a share of the maximum score (e.g., 4.0 / 5 = 80 %). ‘Percentage-point lifts’ compare pre- and post-means converted into percentages.

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