

Empowered Learning Trust Strategic Plan

2020-2021





Contact Information for Empowered Learning Trust

Contact name:

Karen Barker (Chairperson)

Hayley Hathaway (Funding Manager)

Postal address:

3842 Broadlands Rd

Reporoa 3083

Email:

empoweredlearning@xtra.co.nz

Mobile:

027 293 5150

Our Vision	<i>"All children will have equitable access to education regardless of their learning differences."</i>
Our Mission	<i>"It is the intention of the Empowered Learning Trust to deliver screening programs that identify individual student's barriers to learning and offer a range of interventions that assist them to reach their optimum potential."</i>
Who we serve	School age students in the Central North Island region
Our programs and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening for visual processing difficulties (Irlen Syndrome) • Screening for Auditory Processing Disorder (APD) • Screening with Lucid Software for learning differences • Providing education and resources about learning differences such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, Asperges, ADD, Autism, etc
Our goals: 2020-2021	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deliver high quality programs to schools 2. Raise Awareness 3. Work towards sustainable funding 4. Provide support 5. Sustain positive relationships and collaboration 6. Gather meaningful data and evaluate programs 7. Maintain Quality governance

Background and context

The concept of the Empowered Learning Trust was decided upon in May 2011 by a group of people in the Reporoa community who have an interest in education, health and the well-being of the community. They felt that access to a good education is vital for a person ultimately to be able to make a positive contribution to society.

The group acknowledge and admire the work that teachers do, and the schools in our area are committed to delivering quality education outcomes with the sometimes limited resources and information they have at hand. Sometimes young people have difficulty within the framework of this education system. For various reasons there may be barriers to a young person accessing a good education.

The trust identified that students with learning and processing differences such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, Asperges, Attention Deficit Disorder, Auditory Processing Disorder (APD) and Irlen Syndrome, can be disadvantaged by the way they learn or process information. Also, those who have vision and hearing difficulties, plus many others, struggle within the education system often without being identified. Schools often have limited time and resources to support these students.

With this in mind, the trust members felt the need to work with the schools in the area and support them in their endeavours to help students achieve to their full potential and remove any barriers to learning.

In July 2011 this group of people put together a trust deed with the advice of Blackman Spargo Lawyers, outlining their objectives and vision. They decided they would need to be a charitable body for the purpose of raising funds for the various projects they wished to instigate in the future. The group applied to the Charities Commission for charitable status in July, which was duly approved in November 2011. In 2015 an amended trust deed was prepared and signed to reflect the change in structure of the board.

Our aim is to remove barriers to learning so that young people can engage more effectively with their education and reach their true potential. We aim to work collaboratively with other community groups to improve the lives of the 1 in 5 school aged children in our community with learning and attention issues. We provide specialist screening services to schools, learners, families and whanau in the Central Plateau region. In providing support and services for learners with special education needs, the cornerstones to our work are:

- Intervene early and support where we can
- Provide quality services
- Build and sustain productive partnerships
- Build a strong evidence base

Our goals: 2019-2020

Goal 1: Deliver high quality screening programs within school environments

Strategies:

- > Ensure robust screening protocols and reporting channels
 - > Screening staff – train more staff in the Irlen method who are potentially able to carry out other screening responsibilities in order to provide continuity to the organisation should there be a change to life circumstances for present screening staff.
 - > Train teaching staff and Learning Support staff in Irlen screening so they can also screen students.
 - > Look for professional development opportunities for staff
 - > Seek feedback from stakeholders about the ELT programs including staff and students
 - > Investigate why families are not going on to appointments
 - > Gather achievement data from schools as a means to evaluate program impact
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Goal 2: Raise Awareness

Strategies:

- > Maintain and update our resources for parents and teachers
 - > Develop a resource that is sent out to parents before screening begins explaining what we do and why (perhaps via school newsletter)
 - > Continue to present to teaching staff at the schools we work in each year
 - > Talk to organisations in the community about what we do and the benefit e.g. Lions, Rotary, etc
 - > Investigate digital methods of communicating with both parents and schools:
 - Emails to families
 - Potential video clip to school staff that can be watched in their time of choosing
 - Social media
 - Keep website up to date with news and resources
 - > Develop government advocacy strategy.
 - > Talk with the educators of teachers to make them aware of the scale of the issues, and to advocate for the inclusion in training about learning and processing differences, and methods of support.
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Goal 3: Work towards sustainable funding

Strategies:

- > Discussion with CoL Around how there might be funding support through their system (perhaps for things such as Lucid software)

- > Try and procure longer term funding such as three year grants from Lottery Grants Board and RLC
 - > Usual gaming trusts, other community groups, and local councils – maintain communication and reporting channels
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Goal 4: Provide support

Strategies:

- > Empower teachers and Learning Support staff to identify students with learning and processing difficulties through training and provision of resources.
 - > Develop and maintain good resources for families and teaching staff
 - > Provide updates to Reporoa Community of Learning (Kahui Ako) and support where they decide they want it. In particular the new Learning Support Coordinators (LSC) and Learning Support Facilitators in schools
 - > Visit schools individually and talk with staff about learning and processing difficulties
 - > Resources on website kept updated and relevant
 - > Provide transport to appointments for those that have difficulty
 - > Follow-up referrals that have not been attended
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Goal 5: Sustain positive relationships and collaboration with stakeholders

Strategies:

- > Investigate collaborative projects with schools and external providers
 - > Work with new LSC to help identify and support students with learning and processing difficulties
 - > Visit with Optometrist partners at least biannually
 - > Provide screening results to schools via Google Drive, where they can be updated and viewed at any time
 - > Communicate regularly with funders
 - > Initiate a connection with the Ministry of Education in our region
 - > Maintain collaborative funding relationships with Rotary and Lions
 - > Train more people as Irlen screeners so that access is improved to screening services
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Goal 6: Gather meaningful data and evaluate programs

Strategies:

- > Gather student stories
- > Gather achievement data with help from schools – determine useful format to do so taking into consideration the different types of measurement tools used in schools
- > Meet with Sue Winters to discuss data collection and evaluation of programs
- > Look into learning more about Social Return on Investment (SROI) evaluative procedures

- > Gather data before and after intervention programs such as Hear Builder
- > Look into gathering youth offender data around learning difficulties

Goal 7: Maintain Quality Governance

Strategies:

- > Board members to take part in professional development in governance where possible
- > Integrate any new board members, and review induction manual regularly as part of review cycle
- > Policy reviews to be ongoing
- > Work on compiling a confidentiality policy for both board and staff
- > Continue to seek interested board members or volunteers.

Board Members



Karen Barker Dip. Pharmacy, Adv. Dip Arts & communication
(*Chairperson, voluntary*)

Karen was trained as a Pharmacist and assists her husband Ross in the running of their dairy farming business in Reporoa. They have four children, some of whom have challenges with Dyslexia and Irlens. Her personal experiences with these learning difficulties and how they affect people, has encouraged her to support others through the work of the Empowered Learning Trust.



Kathy Cane NZRN (*Board member voluntary*)

Kathy and her husband Malcolm run a deer farm in Reporoa, including production of their own dietary supplement Canes Deer Velvet, which is sold online. They have teenage children aged 19 to 24 years. Kathy is a Registered nurse who has a passion for understanding how the human body functions, and is currently studying bioenergetics. Her vision is that the Empowered Learning Trust will make a difference for those challenged with learning difficulties so that they may follow a more positive path in life, than they may otherwise have.



Yvonne Hathaway (*Treasurer, voluntary*)

Yvonne and her husband, Graeme, are dairy farmers in the Reporoa area. She is the dedicated mother of their three teenage sons. One of Yvonne's interests includes education and it has created an awareness in her, that all children deserve a learning experience that promotes positive outcomes. She believes that identifying barriers and early intervention are the keys to helping those with learning difficulties. She is excited to be able assist individuals and families, whose lives are affected by learning challenges and differences, through the work of the Empowered Learning Trust



Sarah McKnight Royal Society of Health, Dip (Edin) Nursery Education.

Sarah dairy farms in Reporoa with her husband Euan. She is proud Mum to 3 daughters, and has been an active member of the Reporoa community since emigrating from Scotland over 20 years ago. With a keen interest in child development, it is Sarah's belief that every child has the right to be equipped for the best level of education and opportunities available to them.



Kim Shearer Dip. OT (*Secretary, Voluntary*)

Kim and her husband Grahame are dairy farmers in the Reporoa area. They have two teenage sons, and Kim is a keenly supportive mother. Kim is a qualified Occupational Therapist, but more recently has been managing the Reporoa Community Health Service which operates in the wider Reporoa area. Since resigning from this post after ten years of service in this position, Kim has trained to become an Irlen Screener and will be screening students in the Irlen Project.



Annabell Lane. Teacher, Literacy Support Reporoa College (*Board, voluntary*)

I am married to Mathew and have two primary school age daughters who attend Broadlands school. My husband manages Landcorp Rotomahana, and I am a teacher at Reporoa College. My role is Literacy Support teacher for two days a week, providing an intensive reading programme for year 7-9 students who are below their level. I also relieve regularly when I am not busy with Angus genetic data on the farm. We are loving being a part of the Reporoa community, and I am excited about the support the Empowered Learning trust is offering the youth of our community and look forward to being able to contribute from both a teachers and parents perspective.



Anne Roder. Business owner (*Board, voluntary*)

My husband Daryl and I work and live locally in Reporoa. I have been involved in the community in various organisations during our children's years at school, but I am a new member to this board. I really believe in what we do, and the positive changes we can make in a child's learning.

Staff

Funding Manager



Hayley Hathaway,

Hayley and her husband are dairy farmers and they have three young children. Hayley is passionate about identifying and supporting special learning abilities. She has a background in Administration, management, and is a business owner. She is a trained Irlen Screener

Screening staff



Andrea Muggeridge,

Andrea has backgrounds in customer service, business and early childhood learning. She is a parent of three children, and business owner. She is a qualified Irlen Screener.



Keren Leslie,

Keren has a background in Science, agriculture and is a parent who is involved in the Playcentre movement. She is also the Whanau Group chairperson at her local school. She is a qualified Irlen Screener.



Sarah McKnight,.

Sarah has a background in Early Childhood Education and is a qualified Irlen Screener. She has been screening in schools for the last seven years.

SWOT Analysis

The following is a summary of opportunities, threats, strengths and weaknesses identified by the Screening Manager as at 31st May 2020.

Strengths:

- Effective communication with key stakeholders to form strong relationships so as to work towards collaborative projects
- Trustees have a variety of backgrounds in health, education and business and have called on outside advisors to supplement their own knowledge. When there is a challenge, the organisation meets it through innovation and hard work. The trustees are committed to making a difference in their community and to providing quality services.
- ELT has a strong history of fundraising success, and is building relationships with funders. Our reputation and profile is building.
- Among the trustees there is a comprehensive body of knowledge in the fields of Irlen Syndrome and Dyslexia.
Much experience has been gained by trustees on the board and by staff. This grows each year.
- Access to quality specialist Irlen Diagnosticians
- committed and experienced staff
- Irlen NZ is now owned by an Optometrist

Weaknesses:

- Our funding sources are unpredictable and highly sought after by other non-profit organisations, especially since the Covid-19 pandemic will place added pressure on funding sources.
- Copyright limitations on Irlen documents make it difficult to implement new reporting systems that are quicker and more technologically advanced. E.g. digital forms, database data collection and email communication of results/referrals to diagnosticians.
- Reliance on schools for data and statistics
- Irlen NZ only has so many diagnosticians across New Zealand – limits the availability of services to general public.
- We have a reliance on the child and family to follow up to appointments and follow through, ie actually wearing the glasses, and doing their APD therapy, which makes doing budgets for projects difficult, and limits potential benefit to students.
- Privacy laws/limited access to personal and school data, along with contact information that is not accurate
- Increasing demands on our staff

- Succession planning – reliance on existing board, staff and diagnosticians

Opportunities:

- **Government roll-out of Learning Support Coordinators** to support students with learning difficulties.
 - > Qualified and dedicated teaching staff to work with collaboratively to help the students we screen.
- **Increasing awareness and acceptance** from the teaching profession regarding different styles of learning.
 - > *Implication:* This allows the opportunity to suggest screening programmes to identify students with issues, and then help fund and support implementation.
- **Increasing visibility** of our organisation may lead to further offers of projects or funding.
 - > *Implications:* We need to be aware of promotion and how to go about it.
- **Corporate sponsors** may wish to be involved with ongoing support of our organisation
 - > *Implications:* We need to be able to give them a profile in the projects we organise so they are visible to the general public
- **Success of our screening programmes** may lead to the programmes becoming on-going in other local schools.
 - > *Implications:* The Empowered Learning Trust could be involved with the ongoing screening, training and supervision in these projects. (requiring further funding) Information gathered from these projects can also be used to advocate for change in the system if needed. Taupo Primary Project for 2016
- **Collaboration between different community providers** will reach a wider portion of the community and reach those who “slip through the cracks”
 - > *Implications:* higher need may be identified requiring more funding or support.
 - > *Implication:* Increased knowledge and support for our students
- **Multi-year funding** is available once you have an ongoing project
 - > We don’t have to apply every year and funding is certain going forward.
- **Change focus from Irlen to Visual Processing Disorder** – this aligns with our work with Auditory Processing Disorder.
- Managing growth and expansion
- professional development and further study for staff
- New government elected – potential changes to funding and emphasis

Challenges:

The threats considered most important included:

- **Dependence on funding bodies** – there will be a constant need to be applying for funding
 - > *Implications:* the trust needs to assess the real demand for its services, and perhaps prioritise recipients of support. We need to consider private pay options, and be prepared to explore other opportunities for generating income.
- **There are a lot of non-profit organisations** in the country, and volunteers and donors may not be engaged with the same service providers for an extended period.
 - > *Implications:* lots of competition for funding pool
- **Relationship with schools**- it is important to maintain positive, constructive working relationships with all the schools in the cluster to function effectively.
- **Amount of funding is uncertain** – we will constantly be applying for funding and not be sure of the outcome of applications.
 - > *Implications:* Need to maintain flexibility within the projects we choose, and be able to prioritise wisely.
- **Data collection:** - need to provide funders and the public in general with quality data and feedback on the effectiveness of our interventions
 - > *Implications:* - need to gather meaningful quantitative data from schools
- **Board and Staff changes**
 - > *Implications:* Difficult to plan for the future and manage the risk of losing staff
- **School staff changes**
 - > *Implications* – need to continually be educating staff at schools about Irlen and learning difficulties
- **Children not wanting to wear glasses**
 - > *Implications* – need to have staff and parent support as well as peer support systems in place.
- **Limited uptake of services, meaning we have to return funds due to unspent money.**
- **Evaluation of the impact of our work** – difficult to access achievement data from some schools, and each school uses a different measurement tool.
 - > *Implications:* data may be limited and difficult to compare

Changes since last SWOT analysis as at April 2019:

- > Collaboration with Lynmore Primary School staff has lead to great increase in data available as well as professional links to other schools And Kahui Ako – potential for wider collaboration to support students with learning difficulties.
- > We have trained teaching staff as Irlen screeners at several schools in Rotorua in the hope they will help to spread screening skills across their school
- > We have been working with an Irlen trained teacher at Selwyn Primary to screen and support students. This has made a great start with three students fitted with Irlen lenses from this school
- > Covid-19 Pandemic and subsequent Lock-down has meant a break in screening time from March to June – this has left very little time to complete screening before calving commitments begin
- > Angela (Audiologist at APN) has sold her business to another audiologist in Taupo. She tells us that she has another audiologist trained in APD assessment, so we need to make contact and organize referrals and payment.
- > McClelland Visique have sold their practice to OPSM who no longer wish to tint lenses. We will need to find a new supplier for Rotorua families
- > We still have a good working relationship with Specsavers Taupo
- > We have three new staff including:
 - Funding Manager Hayley Hathaway
 - Community Screener – Keren Leslie
 - Community Screener – Andrea Muggeridge
- > Kim Shearer has resigned from her screening role, but remains on the BOT
- > Karen Barker is stepping back from the Screening Manager role and will return to the BOT (passed at the May 2020 board meeting)
- > There was a new government elected
- > Schools are now employing Learning Support Coordinators to help students with learning difficulties.
- > We have a three-year grant from Lottery Grants Board

Actions to mitigate these changes/risks going forward:

- > Work closely with Lynmore Primary and other interested Rotorua schools to deliver wider screening and support services to Rotorua students with learning difficulties.
- > Meet with new audiologist to establish a referral process
- > Collaborate with Stuart Warren, the founder of the icept program to enable school-wide delivery of the support program that is simple for teachers to use.
- > Approach Visique at Greerton, Tauranga to see if they will tint Irlen lenses for us, as well as Ian Finch in Whakatane.
- > Take a measured approach to program delivery as funding may be less readily available due to the strained economic conditions post-Covid-19.