

# Empowered Learning Trust Strategic Plan 2022

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### Contact Information for Empowered Learning Trust

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Our Vision	<i><b>"All children will have equitable access to education regardless of their learning differences."</b></i>
Our Mission	<i><b>"It is the intention of the Empowered Learning Trust to deliver screening programmes that identify individual student's barriers to learning and offer a range of interventions that assist them to reach their optimum potential."</b></i>
Who we serve	School age students in the Central North Island region
Our programmes and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Screening for visual processing difficulties (Irlen Syndrome)</li><li>• Screening for Auditory Processing Disorder (APD)</li><li>• Screening for learning differences using various software</li><li>• Providing education and resources about learning differences such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, Asperges, ADD, Autism, etc</li></ul>
Our goals:  2021-2022	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Deliver high quality programmes to schools</li><li>2. Raise Awareness</li><li>3. Work towards sustainable funding</li><li>4. Provide support</li><li>5. Sustain positive relationships and collaboration</li><li>6. Gather meaningful data and evaluate programmes</li><li>7. Maintain Quality governance</li></ol>

### 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, Aspergers, 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 programmes within school environments

##### Strategies:

- > Ensure robust screening protocols and reporting channels
- > Screening staff – succession plan and continually 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 as required
- > Look for professional development opportunities for staff
- > Seek feedback from stakeholders about the ELT programmes including staff and students
- > Investigate why families are not going on to appointments
- > Gather achievement data from schools as a means to evaluate programme impact
- > Ongoing evaluation of our programmes and investigation of new opportunities

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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- live Facebook and Facebook video posts, Facebook closed info group for parents
  - Keep website up to date with news and resources
- > Continue to seek opportunities to demonstrate the benefits of early intervention to the Ministry of Education

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### Goal 3: Work towards sustainable funding

#### Strategies:

- > Try and procure longer term funding such as three- year grants from Lottery Grants Board and Rotorua Lakes Council
- > Develop and maintain relationships with Kahui Akos in order to demonstrate the benefits of our programmes
- > Usual gaming trusts, other community groups, and local councils – actively build and 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 Community of Learnings (Kahui Ako) and support where they decide they want it. In particular the new Learning Support Coordinators (LSC) and SENCO's
- > Visit schools individually and talk with staff about learning and processing difficulties
- > Resources on website kept updated and relevant
- > Support families to attend appointments
- > Follow-up referrals that have not been attended

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### Goal 5: Sustain positive relationships and collaboration with stakeholders

#### Strategies:

- > Work with 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
  - > Continue to 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 programmes

#### Strategies:

- > Gather student stories and voice
- > 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
- > Review and evaluate data before and after intervention programmes
- > 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, [www.community.net.nz](http://www.community.net.nz)
- > Integrate any new Board members, and review induction manual regularly as part of review cycle
- > Policy reviews to be ongoing
- > Continue to utilise Trello as a Board collaboration tool
- > Continue to seek interested Board members or volunteers

### Members



**Kathy Cane NZRN (Secretary)**

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.



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

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 (Chairperson)**

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.



**Anne Order (Board member)**

**Business owner**

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.





### **Karen Barker (*Treasurer*)**

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.



### **Hayley Hathaway (*Funding Manager, Board member*)**

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.



### **Keren Leslie (*Lead Community Screener, Board member*)**

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.



### **Renee Halliday (*Board member*)**

Renee and her husband have recently moved to this area from Canterbury. They have four children and know first-hand how different every child's learning needs vary. She is a self-confessed person with a passion for helping the community. Renee first heard about the Empowered Learning Trust when her son was diagnosed with Irlens syndrome and later Dyslexia. She is determined to give back to the charity and be a part of helping more children gain confidence with their 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 Board as at 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021

#### 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 are building
- Among the Trustees there is a comprehensive body of knowledge in the fields of Irlen Syndrome and Dyslexia, Auditory Processing Disorder. 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
- Strong relationships with schools and Kai Akos

#### 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, i.e, actually wearing the glasses, 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:

- **Increasing awareness and acceptance** from the teaching profession regarding different styles of learning
  - > *Implications:* 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
- **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
- **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**
- **Collaboration with the Rotorua East Kahui Ako and other Kahui Akos**

### 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:

- > 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 has another audiologist trained in APD assessment, we have made contact and organised referrals and payment
- > McClelland Visique have sold their practice to OPSM who no longer wish to tint lenses. We will need to find an additional supplier for Rotorua families, in addition to Specsavers Rotorua
- > We still have a good working relationship with Specsavers Taupo
- > We have three new staff including:
  - o Funding Manager Hayley Hathaway
  - o Community Screener – Keren Leslie
  - o 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)
- > Learning Support Coordinators have settled into their roles and are assisting with the delivery of programmes
- > We have a three- year grant from Lottery Grants Board
- > ICEPT programme has been implemented and we have a great relationship with its creator, Stuart Warren

### Actions to mitigate these changes/risks going forward:

- > 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 programme delivery as funding may be less readily available due to the strained economic conditions post-Covid-19
- > Approach established funders to discuss the extension of timeframes for spending of grants