



School Counselling Works

A voluntary counselling group for secondary schools in Whangarei is proving successful with mainly Maori students who were disrupting classes, under-achieving and showing very negative attitudes to the education system.

Because several of these students were already well known to most of the statutory agencies, it was felt that voluntary people, or people with a low profile in a Government agency could work more effectively with these students. Consequently the counselling group was recruited from concerned people from the community, but mainly from the branches of the Maori Women's Welfare League in Whangarei.

The approach was to use two people to work with each group of students for one hour a week. The groups' sizes vary from 5 to 8 students. The first two or three sessions were used to get the groups to talk freely and in confidence about the way they saw the education system, teaching staff, and home life.

RAPPORT BUILT UP

When a rapport had been built up, the counsellors then encouraged the students to look at the various aspects of education from the point of view of the schools and the teachers in a more positive way. It was at this stage that changes to previously negative attitudes became clearly apparent. Reports from the teachers showed that the students were less disruptive in class and in one particular group, the members themselves provided the support to help individuals over rough patches.

One of the most heartening aspects of the work with that first group was that some students have since topped their classes, one is a prefect, and others will this year be sitting school certificate examination whereas at first, most wanted to leave school as soon as they turned 15 years.

This type of counselling has continued and in this, third year, it has been extended to include two other secondary schools in Whangarei.

she is fully aware that her younger mothers need help. This awareness has taken her out to attend the meetings held in the community by the Maori Affairs Cultural Officer who is projecting Katerina Mataira's Maori language programme. She is mindful that she must encourage her women to attend as well.

Rotoiti has its Maori identity firmly established and this can be felt and seen not only as they work with their little ones in the centre, but also in their roles on the marae. The group has hosted many a playcentre weekend-workshops and national executive meetings of the NZ Playcentre Federation. Both Horohoro and Rotoiti have set their course, know what they are doing and where they are going. They have such a belief in their work and the benefits, that it gives their families a confident future.

FUTURE PROGRESS

All three groups are taking things slowly and results are most encouraging on the whole.

A visit by the Pre-school Adviser Special Needs, Department of Education, Auckland, was welcomed by the bilingual and bicultural groups and her continued support in supplying written materials has been appreciated.

The next step to be taken will be

the writing of books in the language — learning more language and history — greater interaction with the children and families in the Family Education Centres.

Throughout Waiariki other pre-school groups are observing, and interested to use these principles, and the ultimate aim is that all pre-school groups Maori and Pakeha can blend the bicultural and bilingual concepts into their family education programmes.

The Eastern Bay of Plenty Playcentre Association, through its President, has expressed a keen desire that the idea be adopted and used in their Association. She herself attended the workshop day held at Te Teko, May 2nd 1980, the theme of which was "Maoritanga in Pre-School Education".

The Tauranga Playcentre Association has also indicated a willingness to use Maori values and the Maketu Playcentre, which belongs to the Association, could be an excellent starting point. The roll is predominantly Maori.

The Maketu Playcentre operates in an empty classroom of the primary school and currently is being serviced by a Rotorua Maori Affairs Cultural Officer and by a Department of Education itinerant Maori language teacher. The playcentre therefore operates in a climate suited to developing a cultural programme as well.