

**Do good, better.**

  
**BETTER START  
LITERACY APPROACH**  
*Te Ara Reo Matatini*

  
**UC**  
**UNIVERSITY OF  
CANTERBURY**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha*  
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

**Child Well-being Research Institute**  
**Better Start Literacy Approach: National Implementation**  
**ImpactLab GoodMeasure Report**  
**December 2021**

**ImpactLab  
GoodMeasure Report**

Wellington, New Zealand

Prepared for:  
Child Well-being  
Research Institute

December 2021

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to thank Gail Gillon, Megan Gath, Brigid McNeill, and the Child Well-being Research Institute team who contributed to the preparation of this report by sharing their values, processes, evidence and experience.

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## Simplifying social impact measurement

I had the privilege in public life to work with people who understood the need for positive change in the lives of those around them and worked hard to achieve it.

Our social services do a tremendous job of bringing positive change to our most deserving individuals and communities. These organisations are built by volunteers and community workers who dedicate their lives to helping others.

Social service workers can see the positive impact of their work. Children thriving, families united, jobseekers in new employment and people empowered to change their life course.

With more tools they could do more good. I want to help them by finding ways to make sure that effort is recognised, results are measurable and they can make decisions about how to do more good.

ImpactLab grew from a desire to make available to community organisations tools that use the power of public information and the latest technology, so these organisations can change more lives.

By measuring social change and positive outcomes, ImpactLab enables charities and social service providers to speak the language of funders, investors and governments.

It has been a pleasure to work with the Child Well-being Research Institute to learn how this organisation changes lives throughout New Zealand.

Calculating social value helps inform decision making and investment and enables you to do good, better.

Thank you for joining us on this journey.

**Sir Bill English**  
ImpactLab Chairman

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## Who we are

The team at ImpactLab share the goal of helping all organisations do good, better.

### Our story

Our team at ImpactLab has seen the power of understanding social change. Our founders came together working in the public sector, where we led the development of new processes to link social value measurement with decision making. We believe that all organisations should be able to understand and improve their social impact. Our mission is to help impact creators and investors make decisions that change more lives.

### Our team

To make better decisions, it's crucial to consider both the hard facts and the human stories that substantiate them. Our family of researchers, data scientists and statisticians are committed to combining powerful analytics with what you know works for your community.

Alongside expertise in data-driven decision making, our team brings a wealth of real-world experience. We are parents, teachers, volunteers and customers of social services.

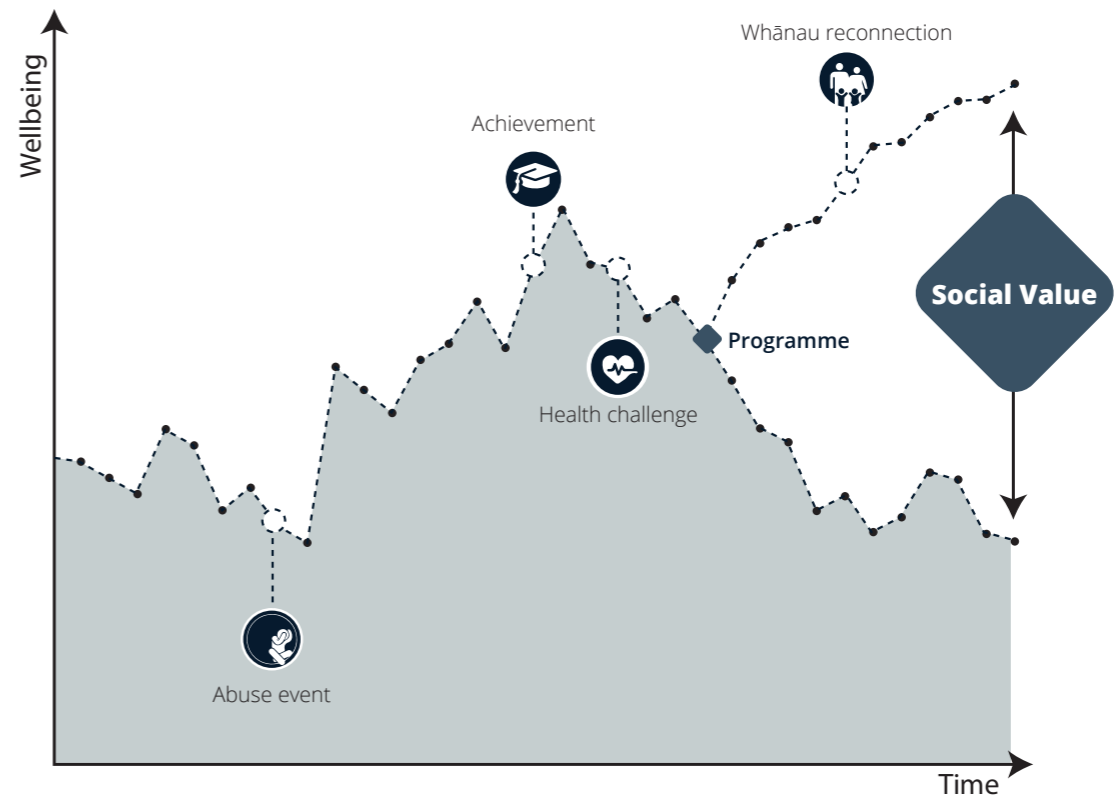
### Our partners

ImpactLab is proud to be partnering with trust company Perpetual Guardian. Together we are using GoodMeasure to improve strategic grantmaking and support collaboration with grantees by applying a consistent measurement framework.



*"The strength of ImpactLab is a real depth of experience in a public policy context. They understand what evidence would be helpful to enable us to make decisions for the future"*

- Debbie Sorenson, CEO, Pasifika Futures



## Understanding social value

Social value is the social impact in dollar terms that a programme achieves for participants over their lifetime.

Throughout our lives, different events occur which impact our overall wellbeing trajectory. ImpactLab measures the impact on an individual's wellbeing across multiple domains when they're supported by a programme to make positive changes in their life.

We measure this impact in terms of both positive benefits (such as increased income) and avoided costs to government.

To calculate social value, we combine these impact values with

- ◆ Evidence from global literature about how effective a programme can be.
- ◆ The size of the opportunity for the people an organisation serves to achieve more positive outcomes.
- ◆ The number of people supported.

By combining these inputs, the social value calculation helps us understand how a programme or intervention helps change lives for the better. We combine the social value with cost information to calculate a programme's social return on investment.

# How we measure social value

Our consistent approach to measurement enables comparisons across wellbeing domains and over time.

## Map programme dimensions

ImpactLab engages with providers to understand their people, their service and the outcomes they seek to achieve.

## Clean and analyse data

ImpactLab uses the best of data about people's lives to understand what works, for whom, at what cost. We combine publicly available insights from the NZ Treasury, NZ Statistics and other sources. Impact values produced using Statistics NZ's Integrated Data Infrastructure are a particularly valuable resource. The IDI is a dataset containing information on every New Zealander about many areas of their lives – education, health, social welfare, employment and others. It's anonymised, so we can't identify anyone. This adds up to over 166 billion facts, for nine million New Zealanders (some have left the country, and some have passed on), for more than a generation of us.

## Collect and synthesise literature

ImpactLab draws on the best academic impact literature from around the world. We access globally screened evidence from top universities and governments to estimate how impactful a programme can be. We also identify service delivery model features associated with the most effective programmes.

## Calculate impact

Our algorithm combines New Zealanders' life experiences, with the wisdom about what works from the brightest minds across the world, with what we know about need in communities.

This combination of system level insights and grassroots know-how means we can consistently calculate the expected impact of a programme, and the social return on investment.

## Map social value to frameworks

Because we start with individuals' experience, we can organise our insights into the relevant government and international frameworks. The New Zealand Treasury's Living Standards Framework (Living Standards Framework) is the Treasury's way of systematising wellbeing. It has four 'capitals' – social capital, financial and physical capital, human capital and natural capital. ImpactLab's GoodMeasure tool links the social value and return on investment created to domains within human capital.

We can also map social value and return on investment to the relevant OECD Sustainable Development Goals.



**Year in scope**  
Jan 2021 – Dec 2023

**Number of children**

93,024

**Number of teachers**

4,896

**Location**

throughout New Zealand



## Better Start Literacy Approach: National Implementation

Through the Better Start Literacy Approach, the Child Well-being Research Institute aim to advance more successful early literacy development for all children.

The Better Start Literacy Approach (BSLA) is an evidence-based classroom literacy approach for Year 0/1 classrooms. The approach supports the professional development of teachers and literacy specialists to improve children's early reading, writing and oral language success. Evidence-based oral language and literacy development activities are incorporated in the classroom environment. These activities include:

- the use of quality children's storybooks to explicitly teach vocabulary knowledge, listening comprehension and narrative skills,
- structured and systematic teaching of phonological awareness skills and letter-sound knowledge through fun, game-based activities,
- activities making explicit links to the reading and spelling context,
- and structured small group reading sessions using the new Ready to Read – Phonics Plus early reader series.

The BSLA was initially piloted through the Better Start National Science Challenge E Tipu e Rea Successful Learning Theme Project in 7 schools throughout Christchurch (see Gillon et al., 2019; 2020). Controlled research trials have shown that the approach benefits all children, but particularly those who enter school with lower levels of oral language. The approach is designed to support key foundational skills for literacy learning and utilises a response to teaching framework that identifies children who can benefit from extra support after 10 weeks of teaching.

Over 2019-2020 the approach was trialled through an Innovative Foundational Learning Grant through the Ministry of Education across 14 schools in Auckland and Christchurch. During this time, 829 pupils and their whānau benefited from the approach, in addition to 79 teachers who received training and mentoring. The adoption of an early intervention approach by the BSLA was seen to reduce the number of children at risk for more persistent literacy challenges by 20%.

Research has linked oral language and literacy development with long term educational outcomes and employment opportunities. Negative experiences at school can lead to a lack of self-concept and can influence general well-being. Reading difficulty is linked to frustration and poor coping strategies across school subjects, leading to poor mental health, negative behaviours, and conduct problems.

By adopting a multi-faceted, evidence-based model that incorporates high quality training, professional development, and mentorship for teachers, the BSLA hopes to move towards a system-level change in how we support early literacy development.

Whānau engagement is a critical component of literacy success that the BSLA supports through workshops, weekly letters to parents, strengths-based reporting, and online resources. This facilitates whānau-school partnerships and maximises the opportunity for children to achieve early literacy success.

The BSLA provides a cascading model of support to enhance teacher practice and move towards systems change. In the current model, literacy specialists (e.g., Resource Teachers of Literacy; Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour; Learning support coordinators) undertake a facilitated BSLA microcredential through the University of Canterbury. Each facilitator pairs with an average of three teachers who undertake a teacher microcredential. Facilitators provide their teachers with classroom-based coaching and mentoring support in addition to the professional learning and development that is obtained by both groups through their microcredential.

Facilitators and teachers are also provided with online and physical resources to support learning and assessment in the classroom. These resources are designed to monitor literacy growth in children's first year of school and provide direction for teaching at the class and individual level. The tailored approach helps teachers to adapt their teaching to meet individual learner needs and identify early children who require additional support to achieve early literacy success.



National  
**Science**  
Challenges

A BETTER  
START

E Tipu e Rea

# The change journey

A team led by Professors Gail Gillon and Brigid McNeill from the University of Canterbury's Child Well-being Research Institute established the Better Start Literacy Approach. This is an evidence and strengths-based, culturally responsive approach for literacy learning and teaching.

The Approach was developed as part of the Better Start National Science Challenge E Tipu E Rea Successful Learning Theme Project (funded through the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment). The Approach was further refined through an Innovative Foundational Learning Grant through the Ministry of Education.

## Evidence-based design of approach

Approach co-designed by classroom teachers and a team of researchers at the University of Canterbury's Child Well-being Research Institute.

Additive, tiered approach to literacy teaching and learning in order to target support to identified student need and ability.

### Tier One: whole class

30 weeks of 4x 30-minute sessions led by classroom teacher with a focus on vocabulary, oral narrative skills, phonological awareness and letter-sound knowledge teaching.

Structured classroom instruction followed by small group reading (10-15 minutes) and utilising the new Ready to Read Phonics Plus series.

Consistent scope and sequence used across whole class and small group reading contexts.

Professional Learning Development for teachers through completion of a university micro-credential course, including mentorship from a literacy specialist.

### Tier Two: small group

A further 10 weeks of 4 x 30-minute sessions led by a literacy specialist or classroom teacher.

## Tailored provision of literacy teaching and learning

### Supporting students

- One quality children's storybook per week with explicit, embedded vocabulary and oral narrative skill instruction.
- Explicit and systematic teaching of phoneme awareness, phonics and the opportunity to practise decoding words with known phonic patterns in small group reading.
- Individually tailored approach to design, delivery and monitoring.

### Supporting teachers

- Through coaching, mentoring and ongoing professional development opportunities.
- Provision of detailed lesson plans, teaching resources and small group reading books.
- Classroom resources link reading books and teaching to student activities and assessments.
- Online monitoring assessments with integrated reporting to track children's progress.

### Supporting whānau

- Mana-enhancing whānau engagement.
- 3x whānau workshops per cohort.
- Provision of online resources including readers, videos, activity ideas and resources that support early language learning in the home.

## Culturally responsive and strengths-based approach

BSLA teachers and facilitators run workshops in the community with educational leaders and whānau to discuss the need for enhanced early literacy education.

BSLA facilitators act as mentors and school liaison points upon adoption of the approach.

Each teacher trained in the BSLA will increase the impact of their teaching practice on subsequent students and classes.

- Culturally responsive aspects of the approach are embedded into the 'evidence-based' design.
- Strengths-based (mana enhancing) reporting.
- Connecting with whānau by establishing relationships.
- Ensuring that teachers affirm the culture, language and identity of tamariki.
- Quality storybooks where children can see themselves.
- Integration of kupu Māori in teaching activities, stories, and Ready to Read Phonics plus readers.
- Focus on embedding bicultural practices in the classroom as guided by the Hikairo Schema (Ratima, Smith, A. Macfarlane & S. Macfarlane, 2020)

# Outcomes map

The outcomes that Better Start Literacy Approach: National Implementation aims to achieve and how these are reflected in the GoodMeasure calculation.

## Referral channels

Selected to participate in the approach through a cross-section of participating schools.

## Client description

Children in their first year of primary school, their families, and their teachers.

## Teaching structure

Evidence-based design of approach

Tailored provision of literacy teaching and learning

Culturally responsive and strengths-based

## GoodMeasure outcomes

These outcomes directly contribute to this year's social value calculations.

- Avoid addiction
- Improve mental health
- Increase academic achievement
- Obtain employment
- Prevent risky behaviour
- Reduce offending

## Additional outcomes

These outcomes do not directly contribute to this year's social value calculations.

- Improve mental health – parents
- Reduce behaviour problems in the classroom
- Reduce specialist support needs
- Future children taught by BSLA trained teachers

# GoodMeasure results summary

Every year, Better Start Literacy Approach: National Implementation delivers \$31,986,869 of measurable good to society in New Zealand.

Better Start Literacy Approach: National Implementation's real-world value is even greater than this, as some outcomes such as increased social connectivity cannot yet be directly quantified with available data.

When we consider the operating costs of the Better Start Literacy Approach: National Implementation, we can calculate the social return on investment that is generated for every dollar that is invested in the approach.

Social value generated for each participant:	\$5,130
Measurable benefits as proportion of approach cost:	3,820%
Cost of the approach per participant:	\$107

The Living Standards Framework is a practical application of national and international research around measuring wellbeing.

It was designed drawing from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) internationally recognised approach, in consultation with domestic and international experts, and the NZ public.

## Definitions

**Jobs and Earnings:** Freedom from unemployment

**Income and Consumption:** People's disposable income

**Health:** People's mental and physical health

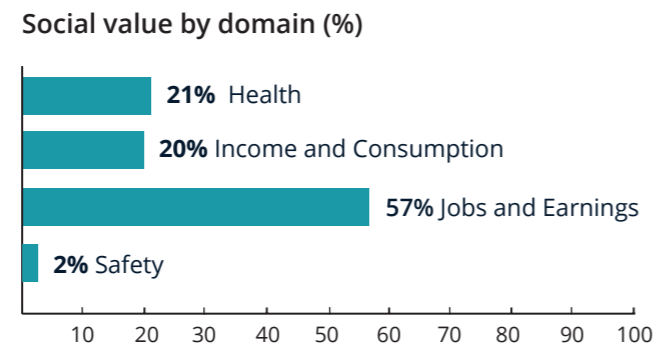
**Safety:** People's safety and security and freedom from risk of harm



## Social value breakdown

Better Start Literacy Approach: National Implementation creates social value across different aspects of people's lives.

This chart shows the breakdown of social value created according to the Living Standards Framework. Each domain highlights a different aspect of wellbeing.



This means that every dollar invested in Better Start Literacy Approach: National Implementation delivers \$38.20 of measurable good to society in New Zealand.

(Jan 2021 – Dec 2023)

# GoodFeatures

GoodFeatures are actionable insights drawn from literature. Research has connected these actions with positive outcomes for participants.

Use GoodFeatures to prompt discussion about your approach and service delivery compared to examples of effective practice from international literature.

## ◆ Structure and design

- The approach allows teachers to voluntarily opt-in to professional development and promotes autonomy and choice.
- The approach provides professional development at convenient locations, such as the school itself.
- The approach is structured and consistent, establishing the professional development teaching schedule and number of weeks involved in advance.
- The approach is intensive and long-term, providing over 20 hours of professional development contact time between teachers and facilitators.
- The approach adapts professional development content to teachers' prior knowledge, level of expertise, needs and interests.
- The approach aligns with the school curriculum.
- The approach focuses on supporting children up to the age of seven.
- The approach focuses on lower socio-economic areas.
- The approach regularly monitors fidelity to ensure it is being delivered as intended.

## ◆ Embedding teaching practice

- The approach introduces teachers to conceptual and procedural knowledge about the approach and explains how this relates to positive outcomes for children.
- The approach equips teachers with specific, concrete, and practical ideas that directly relate to day-to-day teaching and learning interactions with tamariki.
- The approach enables collaboration between teachers through group-based activities both within and across schools.
- The approach utilises digital resources to increase accessibility and assist with ongoing training between teachers and facilitators.
- The approach provides teachers with follow-up support and ongoing training.
- The approach provides teachers with active learning opportunities, enabling exploration, reflection and discussion.
- The approach offers teachers constructive and non-prescriptive feedback.

## ◆ Whānau engagement

- The approach provides specific and detailed guidance relating to workshops and resources in advance of sessions.
- The approach provides workshops at convenient times and locations.
- The approach provides families with ongoing follow-up support and accessible digital resources.
- The approach offers opportunities for families to interact with each other and discuss ideas in a group setting.
- The approach is engaging and understandable, incorporating visual content and using nonacademic language.

## ◆ Early literacy pedagogy

- The approach supports all children's language skills, with a particular focus on children with lower levels of oral language.
- The approach features instruction that teaches children about the code-based characteristics of written language, including phonological and print awareness.
- The approach encourages the use of open-ended questions and expansions when reading quality storybooks within classrooms.
- The approach ensures that literacy instruction is teacher-directed, systematic and explicit.

# Glossary

Below is a list of definitions of key terms contained in this report.

## Amount invested

The dollar amount that has been invested in a specific programme, in New Zealand dollars.

## Cost per person

The dollar amount invested in the programme divided by the number of people supported by the programme (including those who did not successfully complete it).

## Domain

A domain is a way of dividing or filtering the subject and outcome material in your ImpactLab results. ImpactLab refer to domains as per the New Zealand Treasury's Living Standards Framework domains.

## Population

The group of people supported by the programme, in terms of age, gender, and ethnicity.

## Programmes

The services delivered by the provider for the amount invested.

## Social ROI

This is the Social Return on Investment. It is calculated by comparing the social value generated by the programme to the amount invested in it.

## Social Value

The social impact in dollar terms that the amount invested achieves for participants over their lifetime. The social value is calculated by combining impact values with a service delivery quality score, the size of the opportunity to support a population, and the number of people supported.

## Attribution

Some data and information used in the Social ROI calculations is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) Licence. It is attributed to the NZ Treasury.

## Disclaimer

This disclaimer sets out important information about the scope of our (ImpactLab Limited) services. It should be read in conjunction with the contract that we have entered into with you (or your company/organisation) for our services, including the applicable terms and conditions.

We have endeavoured to ensure that all material and information on GoodMeasure, including all ROI calculations and impact numbers (together the information) is accurate and reliable. However, the Information is based on various sources, including information that you have provided to us, which we do not independently verify. Accordingly, we do not provide any representations or warranties in relation to any information, including any representations or warranties relating to the accuracy, adequacy, availability or completeness of the information or that it is suitable for your intended use. We do not provide advice or make any recommendations in relation to decisions, financial or otherwise, that you may make.





Whether you're funding change-making organisations or delivering the services that make a difference, GoodMeasure simplifies impact measurement so you can learn what works and make a bigger impact.

We take great pride in providing a research process that our customers can trust. GoodMeasure's power comes from calculations using multiple reputable data sources, including the Living Standards Framework. GoodMeasure also uses the best of the worldwide evidence about what works. This includes published literature and evidence databases from world renowned academics and impact organisations.

Contact us

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Understanding social value

Throughout our lives, different events occur which impact our overall wellbeing trajectory. ImpactLab measures the impact on an individual's wellbeing across multiple domains when they're supported by a programme to make positive changes in their life.

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|| Helping you do good, better.

Our team

To make better decisions, it's crucial to consider both the hard facts and the human stories that substantiate them. Our family of researchers, data scientists and statisticians are committed to combining powerful analytics with what you know works for your community.

Alongside expertise in data-driven decision making, our team brings a wealth of real-world experience. We are parents, teachers, volunteers and customers of social services.

GoodMeasure for Better Start Literacy Approach: National Implementation

In the year in scope, Better Start Literacy Approach: National Implementation delivered \$381,797,503 of measurable good to society in New Zealand.

Understanding Better Start Literacy Approach: National Implementation's impact

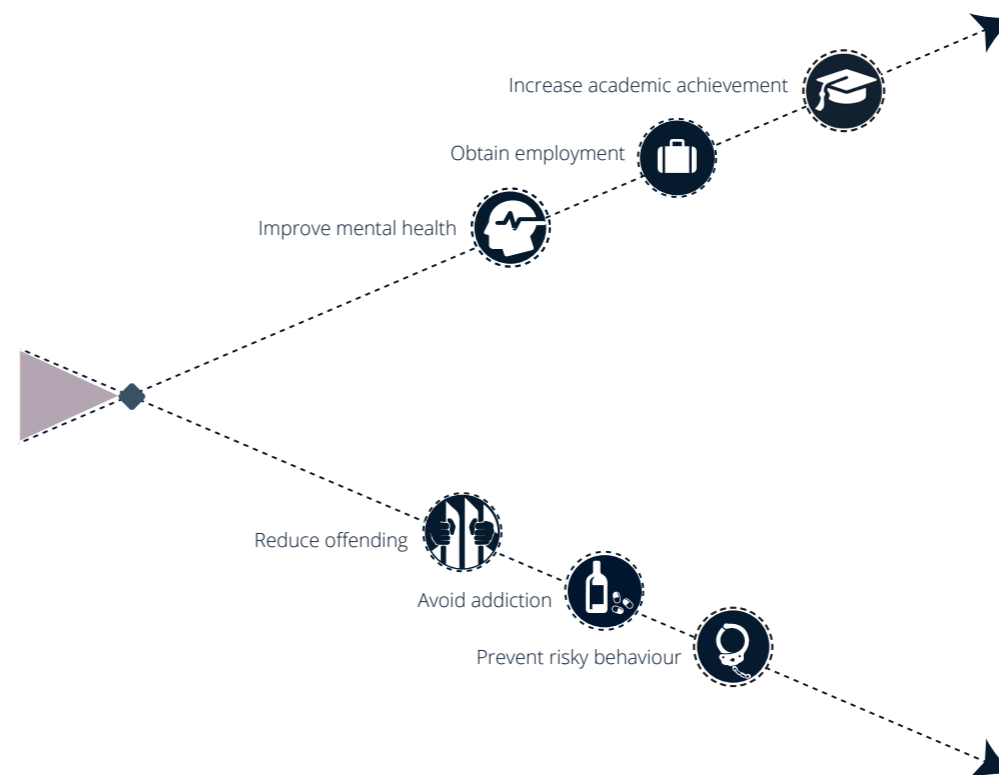
The Better Start Literacy Approach (BSLA) is an integrated classroom literacy approach for Year 0/1 classrooms developed to support children's early reading, writing and oral language success. Through the BSLA, the Child Well-being Research Institute aims to advance more successful early literacy development for all children.

What does Better Start Literacy Approach: National Implementation do?

The BSLA incorporates vocabulary development using quality children's storybooks, structured teaching of critical phonological awareness skills and letter-sound knowledge through fun, game-based activities, activities making explicit links to the reading and spelling context, and structured small group reading sessions. The Child Well-being Research Institute provides teachers with ongoing professional development in the BSLA, detailed lesson plans, and other teaching resources. Whānau are supported through workshops and online resources.

Whom does Better Start Literacy Approach: National Implementation serve?

Children in their first year of primary school, their families, and their teachers. In the period in scope between Jan 2021 – Dec 2023, the approach plans to support 93,024 children and their whānau as well as 4,896 teachers.



GoodMeasure outcomes

These outcomes directly contribute to this year's social value calculations.

- Avoid addiction
- Improve mental health
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Additional outcomes

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- Improve mental health – parents
- Reduce behaviour problems in the classroom
- Reduce specialist support needs
- Future children taught by BSLA trained teachers

Better Start Literacy Approach: National Implementation's impact



Social value definition

Social value generated for each participant	\$5,130
Measurable benefits as proportion of approach cost	3,820%
Cost of the approach per participant	\$107

When we take into account the operating costs of Better Start Literacy Approach: National Implementation, we can calculate the social return on investment that is generated for every dollar in the approach.



Every \$1 invested in the Better Start Literacy Approach: Primary results in \$38.20 returned to NZ (Jan 2021 – Dec 2023)

# References and further reading

In compiling our reading lists we consider a wide variety of topics, focussing on specific aspects of service delivery or outcome attainment. Here are a selection of readings that may be of interest.

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