



Photo: Cultivating the Literacy Landscape Symposium in Auckland, August 2025

You can't intervene your way out of a Tier 1 problem

ENSURING ACCESS TO QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

When our Tier 1 instruction is effective, the number of students who need interventions are reduced, which then improves the effectiveness of Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports. We can't intervene our way out of inadequate Tier 1 instruction¹.

By prioritising professional development for teachers and parents, we create the conditions for lasting success: informed adults, evidence-based practice, and children who feel seen, supported, and capable. Below are comments shared by teachers we provided access to Professional Development, reflecting the difference that professional development has made to their teaching practice and to the learners they serve:

Focus on what matters

The big theme across almost every session was pretty clear: if we want to make a real difference for our kids, we've got to stop trying to do all the things at once. Instead, slow down, focus on what matters, and go deep. Oral language and vocabulary were front and centre. Not just the nice extra bits, but the backbone of learning. They talked about vocab in layers — everyday words, academic language, and then those subject-specific terms — and pointed out how easy it is to assume kids will just pick them up. Spoiler: they don't. We need to teach them deliberately and often.

Professional learning was another strong thread

The message was blunt: quick workshops don't shift practice. Real change comes when teachers have proper time, see things modelled, and get support through coaching. And not scary, evaluative coaching — more like a buddy system. Someone who walks alongside, asks good questions, and helps you reflect. That really landed with me because it felt practical and supportive.

There was also a big warning about initiative fatigue

You know what it's like — ten new programmes in a year and everyone stretched thin. They argued that it's way better to pick one focus, do it well, and stick with it long enough to see results.

Explicit instruction

Explicit instruction came up over and over — the *I do, we do, you do* model, breaking lessons into manageable steps, checking for understanding, and making sure kids practise enough to really nail it. Nothing flash, just solid, consistent teaching. Some of the success stories from schools who've committed to this were inspiring.

Equity was woven through everything

Knowledge-building was framed as a fairness issue — some kids come with lots of background knowledge, others don't, and if schools don't step in to fill the gaps, those gaps just grow. That one stuck with me. Overall it wasn't about the latest fad or shiny idea. It was a strong reminder that clear, deliberate teaching, backed up by proper support and time, is what actually shifts outcomes. Simple, evidence-based practices done consistently really do move the needle.



¹ Quote, Dr Kymyona Burk, Keynote speaker at LM Cultivating the Literacy Landscape August 2025

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Ngā mihi nui Tui Trust for the opportunity. I am very grateful for the chance to attend, build my knowledge base further and network with other like minded people.

Tiana, iDeal Specialist Educator, Te Awamutu

Left: Tiana and Dr Kymyona Burk



I had so many takeaways from this conference, one of the best conferences I have been to! I came back and shared with my teachers and learning assistants. It was a 10/10 experience for me, and I am truly grateful for the opportunity.

*Tania, DP and Leader of Learning,
Kaharoa School, Hamurana*

Photo below: Tania with Natalie with Lorraine Hammond



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