

Dare to Explore II: Auckland Libraries' Summer Reading Adventure Evaluation

August 2013

Technical Report: 2013/039





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Auckland Council
Technical report, TR2013/039
ISSN 2230-4525 (Print)
ISSN 2230-4533 (Online)

ISBN 978-1-927266-12-0 (Print)
ISBN 978-1-927266-13-7 (PDF)

This report has been peer reviewed by the Peer Review Panel using the Panel's terms of reference

Submitted for review on 28 June 2013
Review completed on 21 August 2013
Reviewed by two reviewers

Approved for Auckland Council publication by:



Name: Greg Holland

Position: Manager, Research, Investigations and Monitoring Unit

Date: 21 August 2013

Recommended citation:

Allpress, J A and Gilbertson, A K (2013). Dare to Explore II: Auckland Libraries' summer reading adventure evaluation. Auckland Council technical report, TR2013/039

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Dare to Explore II:

Auckland Libraries' Summer Reading Adventure Evaluation

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Executive Summary

This report describes the results of an evaluation of Dare to Explore: Auckland Libraries' Summer Reading Adventure. Dare to Explore was a summer reading programme for children aged 5 to 13 that involved a series of challenges that were designed to embed reading within fun. The iteration of Dare to Explore that is discussed in this report ran from 10 December 2012 through to 25 January 2013.

Approximately 3.2% of all Auckland children aged 4 to 14, and 5% of all Auckland children aged 5-9, participated in Dare to Explore.

This report aims to answer the following evaluation questions:

- Did Dare to Explore encourage learning and discovery among children?
- Did Dare to Explore maintain or improve children's literacy?
- Did Dare to Explore encourage family engagement with the library?
- How could Dare to Explore be improved in the future?

This evaluation is based on three sources of evidence: registration data for the 7901 children who registered, and two surveys, one of parents/caregivers ($N = 250$) and one of children ($N = 252$) who participated in Dare to Explore.

Overall, Dare to Explore was very positively evaluated by both children and parents/caregivers. Most children (79%) rated Dare to Explore as 'awesome', a small percentage (21%) rated it 'ok', and almost no children rated it boring.

The survey questions that received the most positive responses from parents/caregivers were as follows:

- The library was friendly and welcoming.
- The library was a good place for me and my child/ren to learn together.
- The librarians at this library were knowledgeable and willing to help.
- I will encourage my child/ren to participate in Dare to Explore next year.

Both parents'/caregivers' and children's responses to questions about learning about New Zealand and discovering new methods for finding information suggest that Dare to Explore was successful in encouraging learning and discovery.

Parents/caregivers were asked how their children's reading ability changed during Dare to Explore. The majority (57%) felt that their children's reading ability either improved a little or a lot, 42% felt their children's reading ability did not change during Dare to Explore, and only 1% felt that their children's reading ability had worsened slightly. These findings are important in light of the summer learning effect – the widely studied loss of literacy over the summer holiday break (Entwisle, Alexander, and Olson, 1997).

The majority of parents/caregivers (70%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that Dare to Explore increased their child's enjoyment of reading. Furthermore, statistical modelling showed that increased enjoyment of reading was an important means through which Dare to Explore contributed to improvements in children's reading ability.

Survey results suggest Dare to Explore was successful in encouraging family engagement with the library. Most parents/caregivers agreed with statements about feeling more confident about helping their children to use the library (66%) and about being likely to visit the library more often (65%) as a result of participating in Dare to Explore. Eighty per cent of children reported that Dare to Explore had made them like going to the library either a little or a lot more.

When asked what they liked most about Dare to Explore, parents/caregivers wrote about the way the programme both encouraged reading and was fun and interesting. Many respondents commented on how varied and flexible the programme was – the challenges and activities were suitable for children of different ages, with different interests, skills and learning styles, could be done in different locations, and children could choose which and how many activities and challenges to do, as well as which and how many books to read.

When children were asked what they liked most about Dare to Explore, they mentioned the challenges and reading, the party, and the activities, particularly those involving arts and crafts.

Parents and caregivers were also asked what could be done to improve Dare to Explore. The most common response was 'nothing'. These sentiments were reinforced in the children's survey. When asked "[i]s there anything else you would like to tell us about Dare to Explore?" most children took the opportunity to state how much they had enjoyed the programme.

The area for improvement mentioned most frequently by parents and caregivers was the need to provide differently for children of different age groups. Parents and caregivers asked for separate activities and challenges for different age groups and for the programme to be modified to allow for under fives to participate as well.

A list of recommendations is offered to improve both future iterations of Dare to Explore and future evaluations.

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1.0 Introduction

This report describes the results of an evaluation of Dare to Explore: Auckland Libraries' Summer Reading Adventure, run between 10 December 2012 and 25 January 2013. Dare to Explore was a summer reading programme run by Auckland Libraries for children aged 5 to 13 that aimed to get children reading every day by encouraging them to complete a series of fun challenges.

This report aims to answer the following evaluation questions:

- Did Dare to Explore encourage learning and discovery among children?
- Did Dare to Explore maintain or improve children's literacy?
- Did Dare to Explore encourage family engagement with the library?
- How could Dare to Explore be improved in the future?

1.1 Background

Dare to Explore was born in 2011, when a working group identified and agreed upon the following outcomes for the programme:

- children have fun, enjoy the programme, find it easy and flexible
- children increase their love of books, reading and the library
- children maintain and improve their reading ability and are comfortable and confident library users
- children and their families want to continue their relationship with the library beyond the programme and recommend libraries to others

The following key points of delivery were agreed upon to achieve these outcomes:

- the programme will not be capped
- the programme needs to be flexible, mobile and consistent across all the Auckland Libraries
- there needs to be strong staff buy-in and commitment to the success of this programme
- there need to be celebratory events
- it was to cater for all ages between 5 and 13
- it was to be as easy as possible for the libraries to manage and deliver
- it had the potential to be used in the future

1.2 About Dare to Explore

Dare to Explore was run across all 55 Auckland Libraries, allowing children to 'check in' at any library in Auckland. This evaluation is of the second iteration of Dare to Explore.

Children ticked off the challenges they had completed. Then they visited the library and asked a librarian to stamp their passport. When they had completed at least four of the Home Base, Te Wāhi Tīmatanga challenge set, they received a collectable and were able to come to the party, where a certificate was presented.

After completing at least four Home Base, Te Wāhi Tīmatanga challenges, children could carry on and had the option to complete the following challenge sets:

- Geyserland, Te Wāhi Ngāwhā
- Wild and Windy, Te Wāhi Hauhau
- Sunny Sounds, Te Wāhi Whiti te Rā
- Coast to Coast, Te Wāhi Tai ki te Tai
- Bottom of the South, Te Wāhi ki te Tongā

All the challenge sets were in the passport and children could do as many as they liked.

Events and activities were hosted at the libraries throughout the summer and included arts and crafts, library tours, scavenger hunts, museum visits and guest entertainers. Finale parties were held for the children at the end of January either at individual branches or with two or more libraries joining together and having a larger event.

The marketing and promotion programme for Dare to Explore II involved:

- media releases to suburban newspapers and radio featuring information about the Dare to Explore programme, the importance of children's literacy, etc.
- media releases using social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and the Auckland Libraries blogs
- information on the Auckland Libraries website
- story in Auckland Council publications
- posters on trains, buses, ferries
- visits to schools
- visits to other community groups, e.g. YMCA, Plunkett, churches, pre-schools, etc.
- promotion through local businesses, e.g. bank display screen for community events
- information on community notice boards

1.3 The evaluation method

Parents/caregivers and children were asked to give their feedback on Dare to Explore through a questionnaire. Two questionnaires – one for children and one for parents/caregivers – were prepared by the authors of this report in collaboration with library staff. Parents/caregivers and children could complete their questionnaires online or on paper copies that were available in libraries. A total of 250 parents/caregivers, and 252 children filled out questionnaires. The questionnaire was completed online by 35% of parents/caregivers and 29% of children. As this was a self-selection survey, it is possible the sample is not fully representative of all Dare to

Explore participants. For this reason, results should be treated as indicative. Responses were analysed using SPSS, a software package used for statistical analysis. Open-ended questions were analysed by categorising according to common themes.

2.0 Who took part?

In this section we investigate who took part in Dare to Explore, as well as how they heard about the programme and their reasons for participating. Three sources of data provide an insight into who took part and why: information from registration forms, information that parents/caregivers offered about their children when filling out their feedback questionnaire, and information that children offered about themselves when filling out their own questionnaire.

It should be noted that although nearly 8,000 children registered for Dare to Explore, the majority of findings presented in this report are from the 250 questionnaires received from parents/caregivers and the 252 questionnaires received from children. Because both parents/caregivers and children volunteered to complete the survey, it is possible that those individuals who self-selected to complete the survey are not fully representative of all people who initially registered for Dare to Explore. Most notably, individuals who did not engage with Dare to Explore or who were dissatisfied with the programme may have been less likely to fill out the surveys, in part because they are more likely to have dropped out before the end of the programme. With this in mind, while we believe the results presented in this report are a good reflection of the effects of Dare to Explore, some caution should be taken when generalising the findings of these surveys to all participants.

2.1 Registration form information

Every child who participated in Dare to Explore was required to fill out a registration form or have one filled out for them. While only a small amount of information was collected on the registration forms, they provide the most complete snapshot of who participated in the programme. The registration forms showed that:

- 7,901 children registered, a 21% increase from 2011/12
- Of the registrants, 55% were girls and 45% were boys
- The largest age group were 7-8 year olds (in 2011/12, the largest age group of registrants were 6-7 year olds)
- At 48%, the largest percentage of registrants identified themselves as having at least some New Zealand European ethnicity; 10% of registrants had at least some Indian ethnicity; 10% Chinese; 9% Māori and 8% Samoan
- There were 3,168 registrations in the first week of the programme, a 13.5% increase on the first week's registration figures for 2011/12
- Five libraries had over 300 registrations; Māngere Town Centre Library had 410 registrations
- 1,242 children signed up for a new library card on registering

2.1.1 Were participants representative of children across Auckland?

The 7,901 children who signed up to Dare to Explore represented approximately 3.2% of all Auckland children aged 4 to 14. However, because Dare to Explore was more popular with children between 5 and 10 years of age, the total 'share' of all Auckland children was greater for these age groups. Consequently, approximately 5% of all Auckland children aged 5-9 participated in Dare to Explore, with progressively fewer children participating as age increased (Table 1).

Table 1: Registration data compared with Auckland population.

Age	Auckland population (2012)	Dare registrations	% of total pop
4	21,148	140	0.7
5	22,212	1,043	4.7
6	22,236	1,091	4.9
7	21,778	1,169	5.4
8	21,869	1,131	5.2
9	22,031	1,106	5.0
10	22,638	920	4.1
11	22,732	690	3.0
12	22,995	389	1.7
13	23,272	160	0.7
14	23,556	16	0.1

In terms of children's ethnicity, a comparison with the ethnicity breakdown of 5-14 year olds from the 2006 census shows that the 47% of Dare to Explore participants who identified as New Zealand European/Pākehā was roughly equivalent to the Auckland-wide percentage of 46%.

There was less balanced representation of Indian, Chinese, Māori and Samoan children, however. The percentages of both Indian and Chinese children in Dare to Explore were higher than for the Auckland region as a whole (10% of Dare to Explore participants compared to 6% across Auckland, for both Indian and Chinese).

In contrast, Māori and Samoan children were underrepresented in Dare to Explore. Although approximately 17% of all children across Auckland identify as Māori, only 9% of Dare to Explore participants were Māori. Similarly, while approximately 12% of all Auckland children identify as Samoan, only 8% of Dare to Explore participants were Samoan.

Although Auckland's ethnic makeup may have changed slightly since the 2006 census (most likely with the share of Asian and Pasifika growing slightly), the discrepancy for Māori and Samoan highlights a possible need for future iterations of Dare to Explore to focus on more actively encouraging participation amongst these populations.

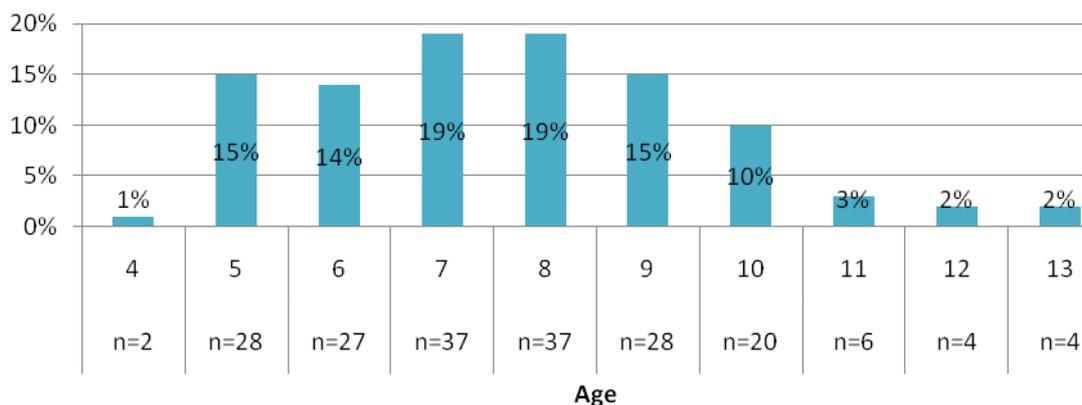
2.2 Parent/caregivers' survey responses

Parents and caregivers were asked to indicate the age, gender, and ethnicity of their child,¹ as well as the language that their family speaks at home, how they found out about Dare to Explore, and why they wanted their children to participate in Dare to Explore.

2.2.1 Age

Consistent with the registration form data, the most numerous ages were 7 and 8 (both reflecting 19% of responses). The mean age was 7 and the median was 8.

Figure 3: Age of participating children – parent/caregivers' survey responses.²



2.2.2 Gender

Sixty two per cent of survey respondents' children were female. This number was slightly higher than the total percentage of girls registered in Dare to Explore (55%).

Table 2: Gender of participating children - parent/caregivers' survey responses.

Gender	N	%
Male	72	38.3
Female	116	61.7

2.2.3 Ethnicity

Parents were asked to indicate the ethnicity of their child that participated in Dare to Explore (or one of their children if more than one participated). Parents were able to select and/or write more than one ethnicity. The most common ethnicity of parents/caregivers who selected 'Other' was 'New Zealander' ($n = 13$)

¹ If parents/caregivers had more than one child participating in Dare to Explore they were asked to provide the details of either their child that participated most in Dare to Explore or their child that participated least. Parents were randomly assigned to one of these options.

² Note, the number of responses for questions related to parents'/caregivers' children is less than the total number of parents/caregivers responding because a reasonable number of parents did not answer this question.

Table 3: Ethnicity of participating children - parent/caregivers' survey responses.

Ethnicity	N	%
NZ European / Pākehā	97	51.6%
Other	31	16.5%
Chinese	15	8.0%
Other European	13	6.9%
Maori	11	5.9%
Indian	9	4.8%
Samoan	7	3.7%
British or Irish	7	3.7%
Cook Island Maori	4	2.1%
Korean	3	1.6%
Tongan	2	1.1%
Other Asian	1	0.5%
Other Pacific Peoples	1	0.5%

Table 4: 'Other' ethnicity - parent/caregivers' survey responses.

Ethnicity	N
New Zealander	13
Filipino	2
Afro European	1
American/kiwi	1
Brazilian	1
Indo-Fijian	1
Kiwi Euro	1
Korean English	1
Maori, pacific island and kiwi	1
Middle east	1
Muslim	1
Nigerian	1
Australian	1
Kiwi/Korean	1
Sri Lankan	1
SA European	1
SE Asian	1
South African	1
Zambia, South Africa	1

Ethnicity data from registration forms and the parents'/caregivers' survey is difficult to compare due to the slightly different ethnic categories used. However, it appears that proportions of Chinese were slightly lower for the survey than in the registration data and proportions of Indian and Samoan were notably lower for the survey than in the registration data. Proportions of 'Other Europeans' were higher for the survey than in the registration data. This suggests that the views of Chinese, Indian and Samoan participants may be somewhat underrepresented in the survey data. Efforts should be made to improve recruitment of survey respondents from these groups in the future.

2.2.4 Main language at home

The majority (83%) of respondents spoke English at home. The remaining 17% was spread fairly evenly across a number of other languages. Languages spoken by parents/caregivers who selected 'Other' included Chinese, Tamil, Gujarati and Punjabi.

Table 5: Main language spoken at home.

Language	N	%
English	176	83.4
Other	19	9.0
Samoan	5	2.4
Northern Chinese	5	2.4
Korean	3	1.4
Hindi	2	0.9
Tongan	1	0.5

2.2.5 How did parents/caregivers find out about Dare to Explore?

Parents/caregivers were asked how they found out about Dare to Explore (with the option to choose more than one reason).

The majority (68%) of parents/caregivers heard about Dare to Explore directly from Auckland Libraries. Only 8% of parents/caregivers heard about Dare to Explore from the Auckland Libraries website, indicating both the importance of the physical library as a vehicle for communication, as well as, perhaps, the need to enhance Dare to Explore's presence on the internet.

A reasonably large proportion (29%) of parents/caregivers heard about Dare to Explore because they or their child had participated in a previous summer reading programme. Schools also were an important means of information, with close to 1 in 5 respondents (18%) hearing through their children's school. When asked how Dare to Explore could be improved, six parents mentioned that the programme should be advertised more through schools to encourage early registration:

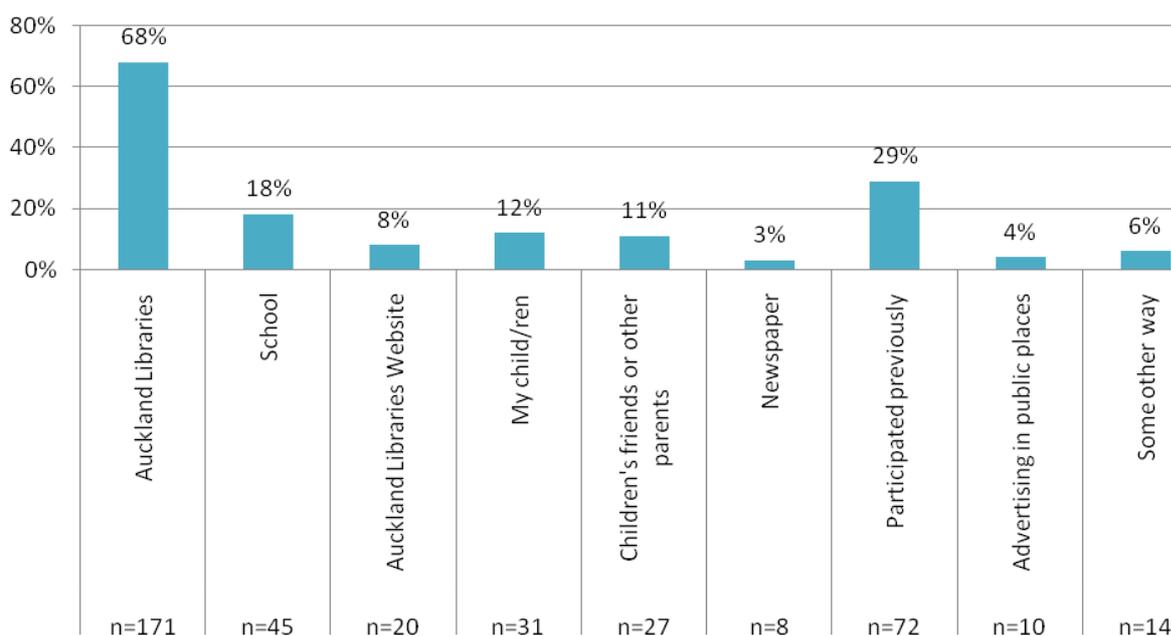
"Notification to schools so we remember to register early."

"Send information to school i.e. have a librarian go to school to talk about it"

"Getting teachers to talk about it in schools or getting parents to sign up before the holidays"

The remaining means of communication were much less prevalent.

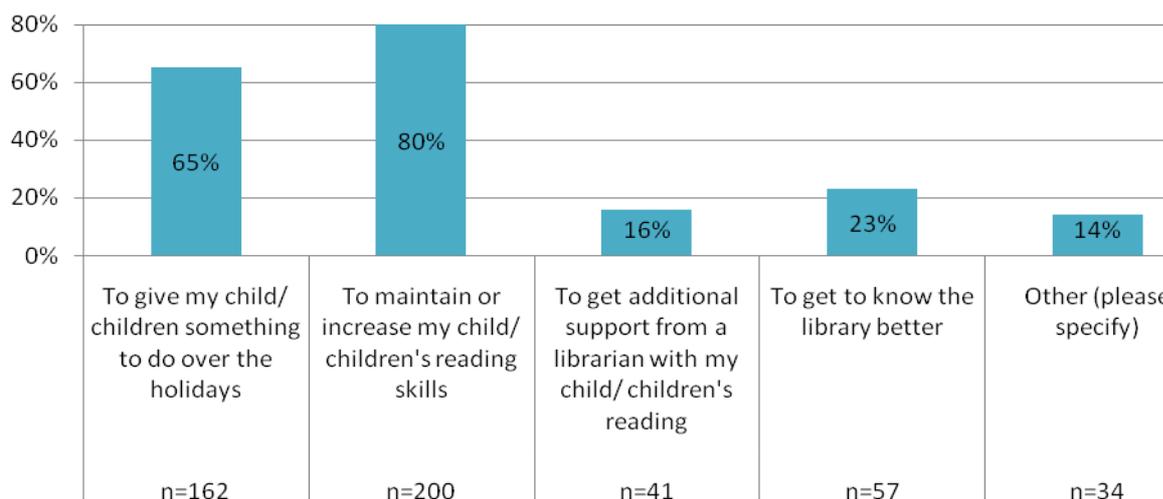
Figure 4: How did you find out about Dare to Explore?



2.2.6 Why did parents/caregivers want their children to participate?

The overwhelming majority of parents/caregivers (80%) wanted their children to participate in Dare to Explore to maintain or increase their children’s reading skills. A large proportion of parents/caregivers (65%) also wanted their children to participate so they had something to do over the summer.

Figure 5: Why did you want your child/children to participate in Dare to Explore?



A number of parents/caregivers therefore appeared to be dually motivated by a desire to develop their children’s reading ability as well as keep them entertained. This dual motivation is interesting in light of Dare to Explore’s aim to embed reading into fun. The programme was described as fun by large number of parents/caregivers in their open-ended feedback:

“I liked that it made my daughter more inclined to read for fun rather than as a chore”

“Creative activities that promotes reading while having fun”

A few parents/caregivers suggested that the right balance between reading and entertainment had not been achieved for them, but they were a small minority:

“More reading focussed activities – the activities are good but I feel they detract from the reading”

“Make the reading something that gets ticked off. It's too easy for child to focus on activities and forget about doing reading.”

“Just focus on the reading aspect as in earlier years. All the other stuff is a distraction to what is really important - keeping the kids reading. The previous system was better than the

current Dare to Explore system - the kids loved the regular check-ins and small rewards along the way.”

Close to 1 in 4 parents/caregivers (23%) were motivated by a desire to get to know the library better, while 16% of parents/caregivers wanted additional support from librarians with their children’s reading.

Many of the ‘other’ reasons offered by parents/caregivers centred around their children wanting to participate because it looked fun, as well as parents/caregivers wanting to give some structure to their children’s summer reading and learning.

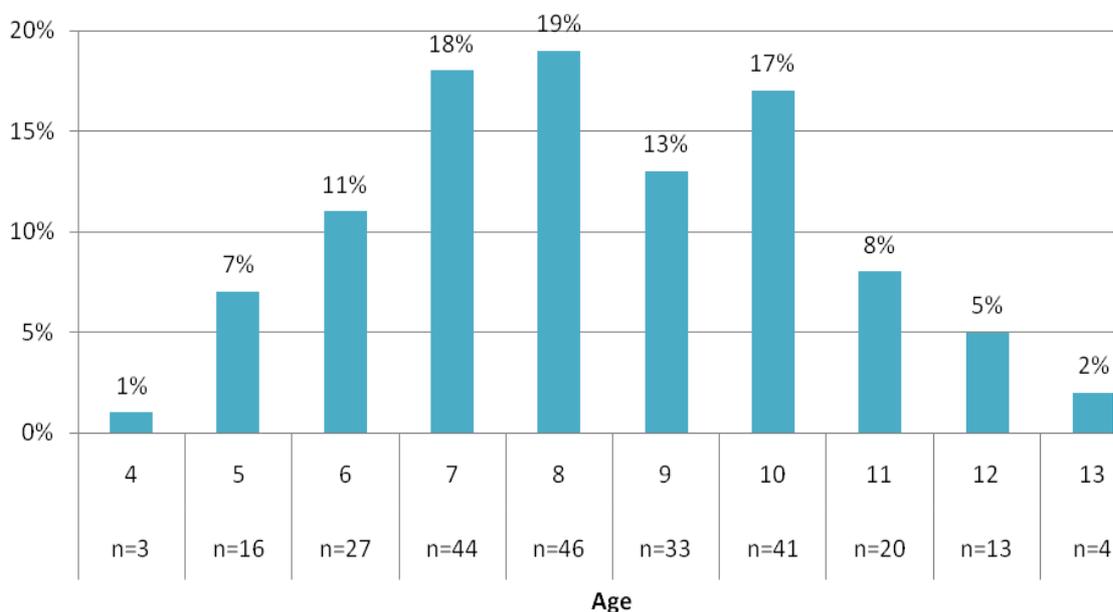
2.3 Children’s survey responses

Children were asked their age, how they heard about Dare to Explore and why they wanted to join.

2.3.1 Age

Consistent with both the registration form data and parent/caregiver survey responses, the most numerous ages were 7 and 8. Proportions of 7, 8 and 10 year olds were slightly higher in the children’s survey than in registration data. Proportions of 5 and 6 year olds were lower in the children’s survey than in registration data, possibly reflecting the greater difficulty this age group would have had completing the survey.

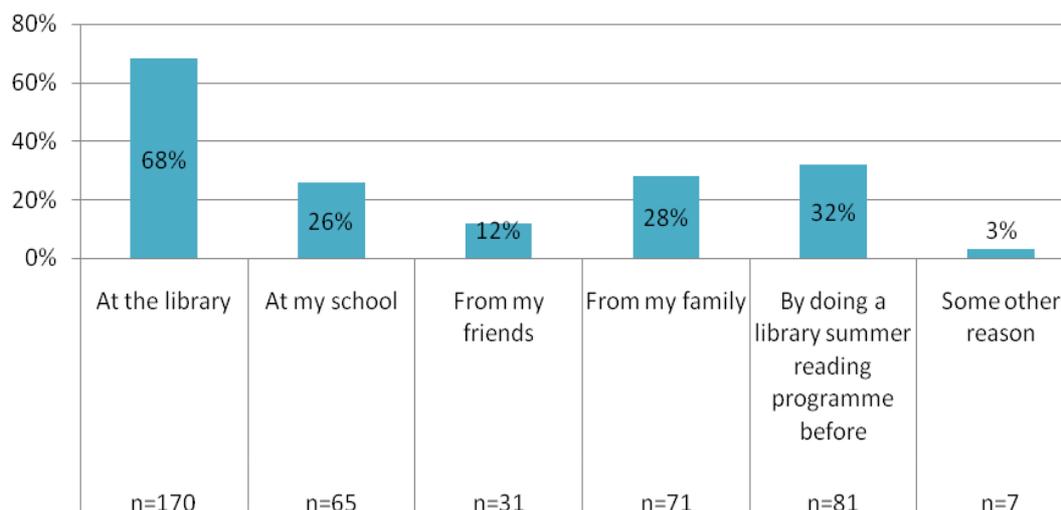
Figure 6: Age of participating children - children's survey



2.3.2 How did children hear about Dare to Explore?

As in the parent/caregiver survey, the majority (68%) of children heard about Dare to Explore directly from Auckland Libraries. Relatively large proportions had also heard about Dare to Explore because they had participated in a previous summer reading programme (32%) and through their school (26%).

Figure 7: How did you hear about Dare to Explore?



2.3.3 Why did children join Dare to Explore?

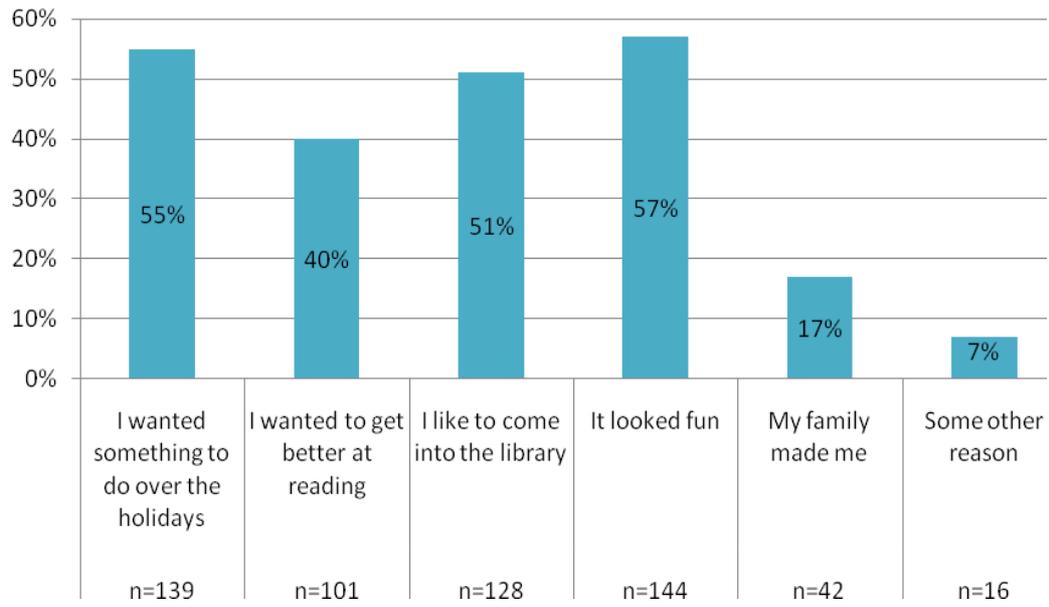
The primary motivation of the children was entertainment ('it looked like fun', 'I wanted something to do over the holidays', and 'I like to come into the library').

It is interesting to note the difference between the reasons stated by children and those offered by their parents/caregivers. While the primary interest of children was entertainment, the primary motivation of parents/caregivers was to improve their children's reading ability. Despite the different motivations of children and adults, a large proportion of children (40%) were also motivated to participate in Dare to Explore in order to get better at reading.

A smaller percentage (17%) stated that their family made them participate in Dare to Explore.³ However, more than half (62%) of these children also stated at least one of the other reasons for participating. This means that the number of children who reported participating *only* because their family made them was considerably smaller (6% of the total sample).

³ Interestingly, although these children rated Dare to Explore highly (with a mean of 2.62 out of 3, where 2 was ok and 3 was awesome), they were significantly less positive than those who were not explicitly made to participate by their family (who had a mean rating of 2.81 out of 3), $t(46.60)$, $p = .04$.

Figure 8: Why did you join Dare to Explore?



3.0 Where and how did children do Dare to Explore?

3.1 What libraries did families use to do Dare to Explore?

Information on the libraries used by Dare to Explore participants is available from two sources – registration data and parents'/caregivers' responses to a survey question about the main library used.

Participants were asked when registering to indicate which library they planned to use most to do Dare to Explore.

Table 6: Registration data – participation by library.

Library	N	%
Mangere Town Centre Library	410	5.2
Highland Park Library	373	4.7
Papatoetoe Library	333	4.2
Mangere East Library	320	4.1
Papakura Sir Edmund Hillary Library	302	3.8
Botany Library	263	3.3
Howick Library	225	2.8
Pakuranga Library	213	2.7
New Lynn War Memorial Library	210	2.7
Mt Roskill Library	201	2.5
Grey Lynn Library	199	2.5
East Coast Bays Library	194	2.5
Massey Library	190	2.4
Onehunga Library	182	2.3
Waitakere Central Library	178	2.3
Remuera Library	165	2.1
Glen Eden Library	165	2.1
Manurewa Library	159	2.0
Blockhouse Bay Library	154	1.9
Glenfield Library	153	1.9
St Heliers Library	152	1.9
Panmure Library	152	1.9
Birkenhead Library	138	1.7
Whangaparaoa Library	136	1.7
Titirangi Library	133	1.7
Tupu Youth Library	131	1.7
Takapuna Library	128	1.6
Waiheke Library	125	1.6
Mahurangi East Library	120	1.5

Library	N	%
Kumeu Library	119	1.5
Warkworth Library	118	1.5
Mangere Bridge Library	116	1.5
Northcote Library	115	1.5
Epsom Library	113	1.4
Mt Albert Library	110	1.4
Manukau Library	107	1.4
Albany Village Library	101	1.3
Orewa Library	93	1.2
Wellsford War Memorial Library	91	1.2
Avondale Library	90	1.1
Otahuhu Library	88	1.1
Waiuku Library	81	1.0
Ranui Library	80	1.0
Pt Chevalier Library	79	1.0
Devonport Library	77	1.0
Pukekohe Library	77	1.0
Helensville Library	70	0.9
Otara Library	67	0.8
Clendon Te Matariki Library	66	0.8
Te Atatu Peninsula Library	62	0.8
Leys Institute Library Ponsonby	62	0.8
Parnell Library	42	0.5
Glen Innes Library	42	0.5
Central City Library	31	0.4
Total	7901	100

In the survey, parents/caregivers were asked what the main library was that they and their children used for Dare to Explore. It is important to note that this list should be read primarily as a reflection of which libraries encouraged their users to complete the survey, rather than which libraries had the most participants. Future evaluations of Dare to Explore would be strengthened by investigating ways of recruiting survey respondents independent of libraries, so as to avoid biasing responses toward high-performing libraries (i.e., it is likely that lower-performing libraries might also have been less effective in recruiting survey respondents). One option is to ask for postal and/or

email address details on the enrolment forms and use this information to send out surveys to a random selection of registrants.

Table 7: Main library - parent/caregivers' survey responses.

Library	N	%			
Highland Park Library	20	8.5	Te Matariki Clendon Library	4	1.7
Glenfield Library	18	7.7	Manukau Library and Research Centre	3	1.3
Onehunga Library	16	6.8	New Lynn War Memorial Library	3	1.3
Mahurangi East Library	15	6.4	Northcote Library	3	1.3
Sir Edmund Hillary Library	15	6.4	Pakuranga Library	3	1.3
Massey Library	14	6.0	Waiuku Library	3	1.3
Orewa Library	11	4.7	Wellsford War Memorial Library	3	1.3
Birkenhead Library	10	4.3	Otahuhu Library	2	0.9
East Coast Bays Library	9	3.8	Te Atatu Peninsula Library	2	0.9
Howick Library	8	3.4	Albany Village Library	1	0.4
Waitakere Central Library	8	3.4	Botany Library	1	0.4
Manurewa Library	7	3.0	Glen Eden Library	1	0.4
Blockhouse Bay Library	6	2.6	Grey Lynn	1	0.4
Titirangi Library	6	2.6	Kumeu Library	1	0.4
Warkworth Library	6	2.6	Leys Institute Library Ponsonby	1	0.4
Panmure Library	5	2.1	Mt Roskill Library	1	0.4
Pt Chevalier Library	5	2.1	Parnell Library	1	0.4
Takapuna Library	5	2.1	Pukekohe Library	1	0.4
Devonport Library	4	1.7	Remuera Library	1	0.4
Mt Albert Library	4	1.7	Tupu Youth Library	1	0.4
Papatoetoe Library	4	1.7	Waiheke Library	1	0.4
Library	N	%			

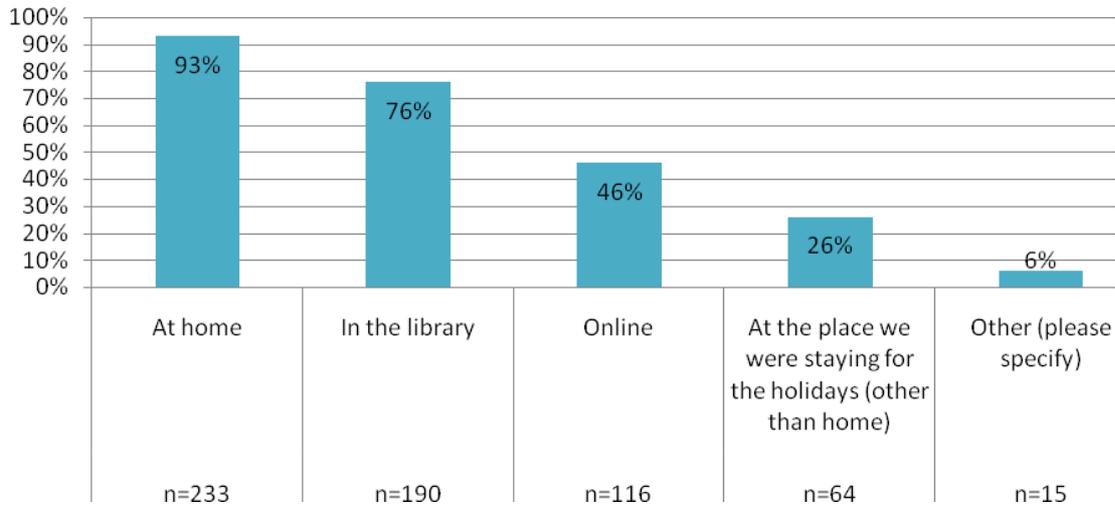
A few libraries were not mentioned as a main library by any survey respondents, some of which had large numbers of registrations:

- Epsom Library (113 registrations)
- Mangere Bridge Library (116 registrations)
- Mangere East Library (320 registrations)
- Mangere Town Centre Library (410 registrations)
- St Heliers Library (152 registrations)
- Whangaparaoa Library (136 registrations)

3.2 At home, in the library or online?

Parents/caregivers were asked where they and their children did Dare to Explore (with the option to choose more than one location). Almost all did at least some of Dare to Explore at home, most did it in the library and nearly half did at least some of Dare to Explore online.

Figure 9: Where did you do Dare to Explore?

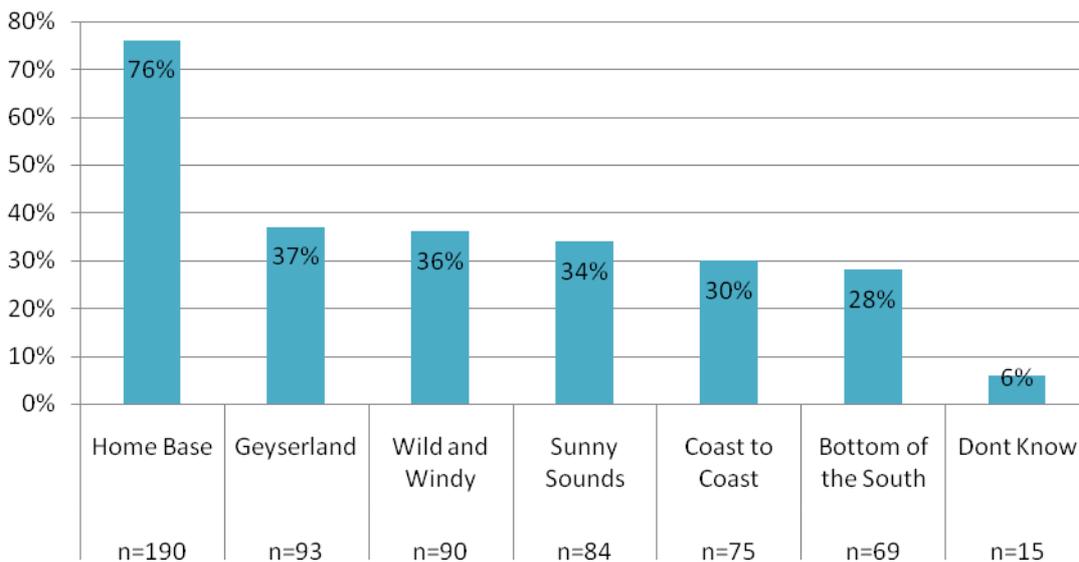


3.3 How many of the challenge sets did children complete?

Parents/caregivers were asked which challenge sets their children completed during Dare to Explore. Three out of four (76%) parents/caregivers reported that their child had completed the ‘Home Base, Te Wāhi Tīmatanga’ challenge set, with approximately one third of children completing each of the other challenge sets. ‘Home Base, Te Wāhi Tīmatanga’ was the only challenge set that had to be completed – the remaining challenge sets were optional.

A total of 26% of parents/caregivers reported that their children completed all six challenge sets; 6% reported that five sets were completed; 7% reported that four sets were completed; 11% reported that three sets were completed; 16% reported that two sets were completed; and 35% reported that only one set was completed.

Figure 10: How many of the challenge sets did your child complete during Dare to Explore?

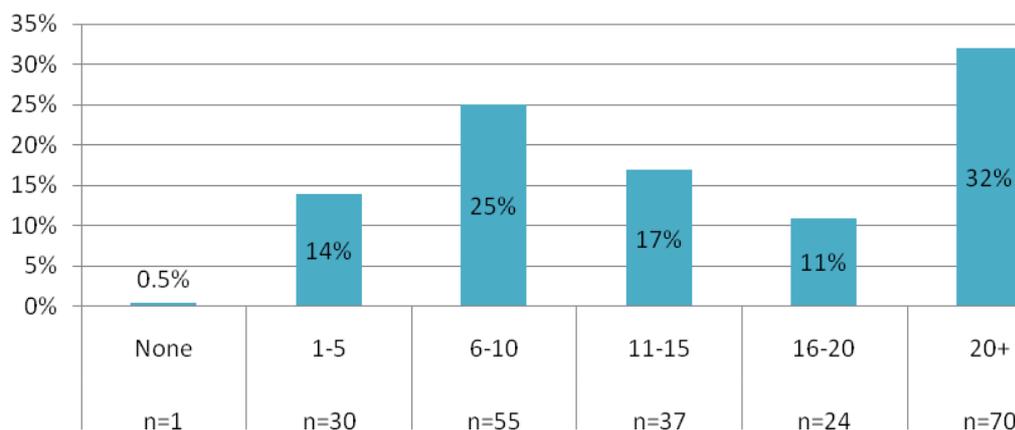


3.4 How many books did children read?

A large percentage of parents (32%) reported that their children read over 20 books during Dare to Explore. These '20+ book readers' were spread across the age range.

The next most common range of books identified in parents'/caregivers' responses was 6-10, followed by 11-15, 1-5 and 16-20.

Figure 11: How many books did you child read during Dare to Explore?



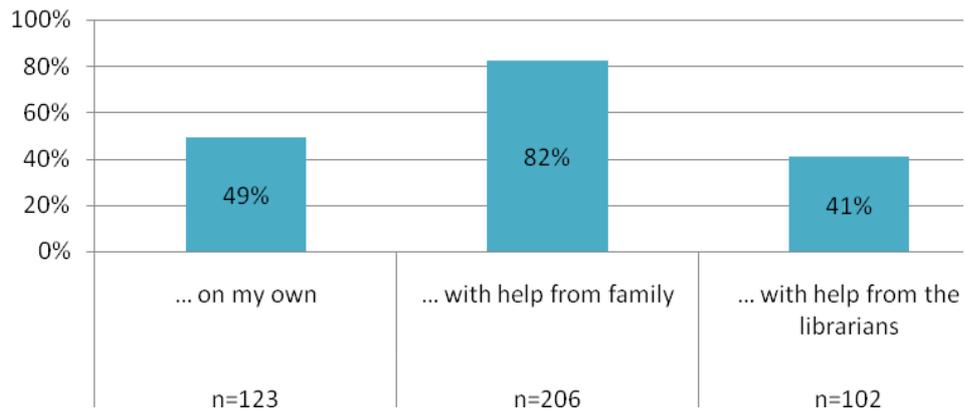
3.5 How were children helped to do Dare to Explore?

Children were asked if they did Dare to Explore on their own, with help from family, or with help from the librarians (with the option to choose more than one answer).

The majority were helped by their family (82%), although almost 1 in 5 children (18%) received no help from their families.

Approximately half of all children reported doing at least some of Dare to Explore in their own. Of those who did at least some of Dare to Explore on their own, 26% (reflecting a total of 13% of all children) did Dare to Explore with help from neither their family nor from the librarians.

Figure 12: I did Dare to Explore...on my own/with help from family/librarians.

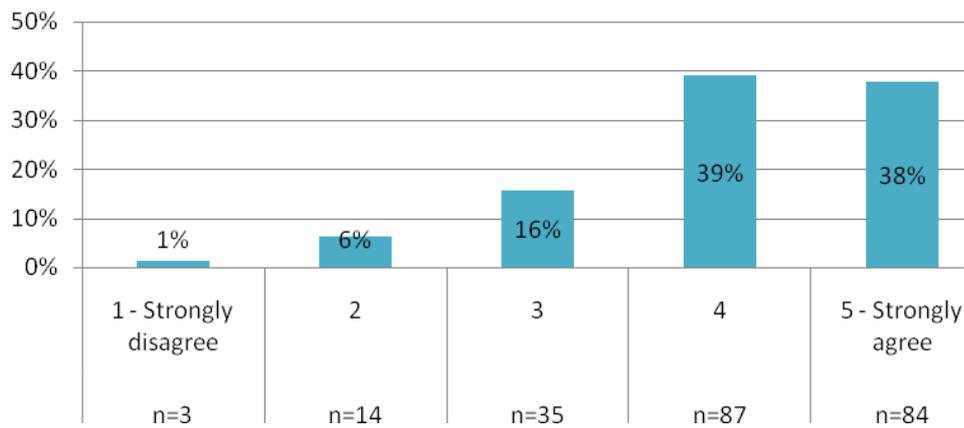


4.0 Learning and discovery

4.1 Did Dare to Explore encourage children to discover and learn new things?

Three quarters (77%) of parents/caregivers agreed (selected 4 or 5) with the statement 'Dare to Explore encouraged my child/ren to discover and learn new things'.

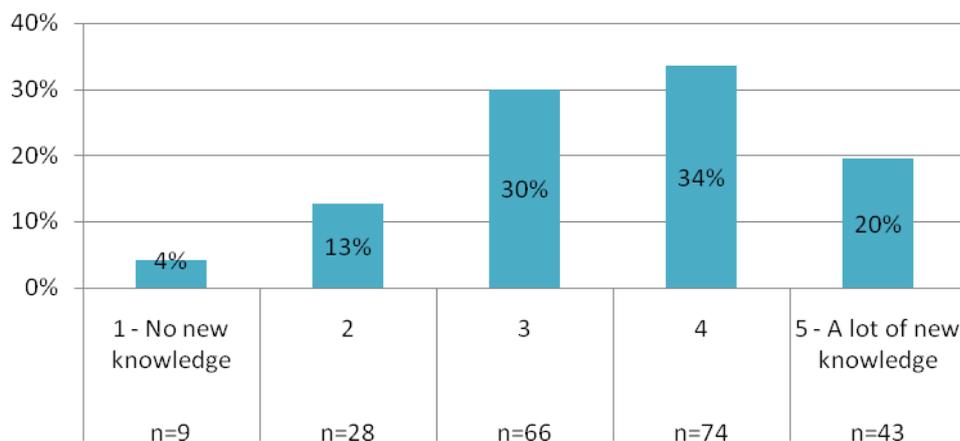
Figure 13: Dare to Explore encouraged my child to discover and learn new things.



4.2 How much did children learn about New Zealand?

Parents/caregivers were asked what their children learned about New Zealand as a result of participating in Dare to Explore. Although over half (53%) of parents/caregivers reported that their child had acquired some new knowledge (selected 4 or 5), nearly a third (30%) gave a neutral response, suggesting some of the learning and discovery addressed by the previous question was not specific to New Zealand (the theme of Dare to Explore).

Figure 14: What did your child learn about New Zealand?



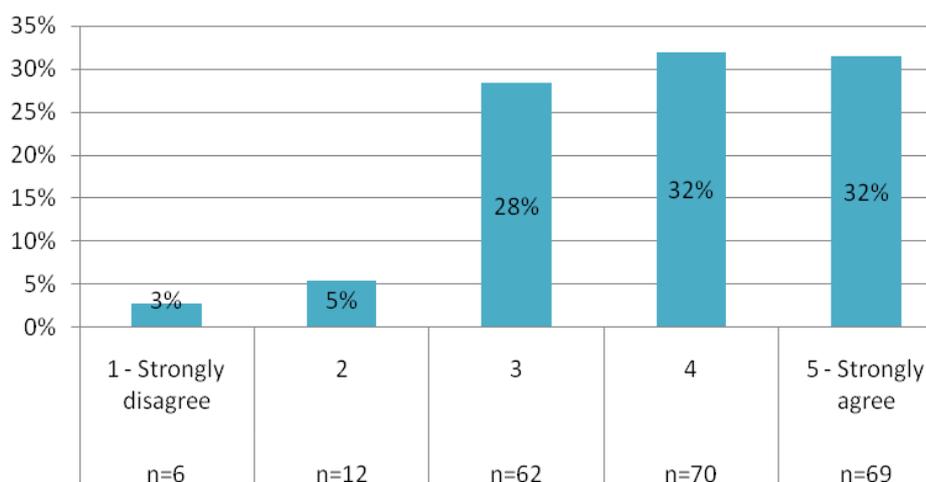
Children were also asked how much they learned about New Zealand during Dare to Explore. Just over half (53%) reported that they had learned a little bit, while 40% reported learning a lot. Only 7% ($n = 17$) of children reported that they had learnt nothing.

4.3 Did children learn new ways to find information?

Parents/caregivers were asked whether their children learned a new way to find information (for example, finding things in the library, using books or a new website not seen before, asking a librarian for help, visiting a library or research centre to find information). Three quarters (75%) of parents/caregivers reported that their children had learnt a new way to find information. One in five (19%; $n = 42$) parents/caregivers reported that their child had not learnt a new way to find information, while a further 6% stated that they did not know.

Parents/caregivers were then asked a follow-up question about whether their children would have the confidence to look for information in this way again, for example, when they return to school or visit the library again. Nearly two thirds (64%) of parents agreed (selected 4 or 5) with that.

Figure 15: My child will have the confidence to look for information in this way again.



Children were also asked whether Dare to Explore helped them learn new ways to do things in the library on their own. Most children (90%) responded that Dare to Explore had helped them either a little bit or a lot in this regard.

Table 8: Has Dare to Explore helped you learn new ways to do things in the library on your own?

	N	%
No	24	10.0
Yes, a little bit	107	44.6
Yes, a lot	109	45.4

5.0 Literacy

5.1 Did Dare to Explore increase children’s reading ability?

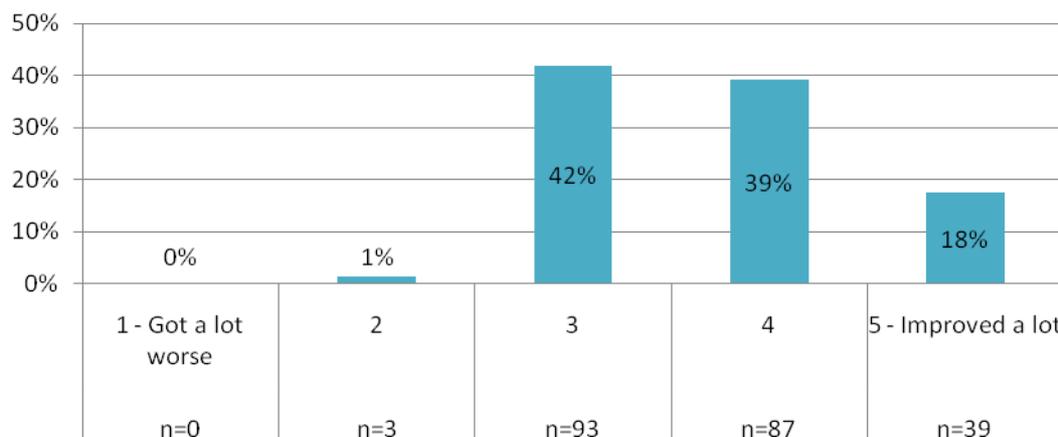
Parents/caregivers were asked how their children’s reading ability changed during Dare to Explore. The majority (57%) felt that their children’s reading ability either improved a little or a lot, while 42% felt their children’s reading ability did not change during Dare to Explore.

Almost no parents (1%) felt that their children’s reading ability got worse during Dare to Explore (selected 1 or 2).

While these figures reflect the subjective judgements of parents, the findings are nevertheless important when seen in the light of the summer learning effect (Entwisle, Alexander, and Olson, 1997). The summer learning effect is the widely studied loss of literacy over the summer holiday break. Seen in this light, not only is a reported increase in reading ability in 57% of children impressive, but the maintenance of reading ability in 42% of children may also reflect a meaningful improvement on what may otherwise have been a loss of reading ability if the children had not participated in Dare to Explore.

Mean response = 3.73.

Figure 16: How has your child's reading ability changed during Dare to Explore?



Children were also asked whether they thought Dare to Explore helped with their reading over the summer. The answers provided by children support the observations of parents, where 94% of children felt that Dare to Explore helped their reading either a little bit or a lot. The majority of these children felt that the programme helped their reading a lot.

Table 9: Do you think Dare to Explore helped with your reading over the summer?

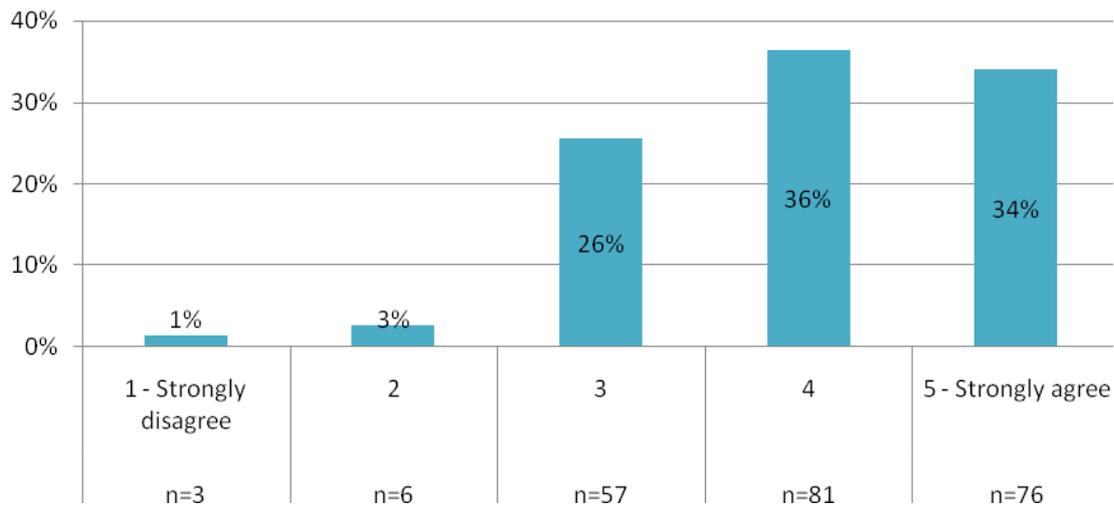
	N	%
No	14	5.9
Yes, a little bit	92	38.8
Yes, a lot	131	55.3

5.2 Did Dare to Explore increase enjoyment of reading?

Parents/caregivers were asked how much they agreed with the statement that Dare to Explore increased their child's enjoyment of reading. The majority (70%) agreed with this statement (selected 4 or 5), while a quarter gave a neutral response. This finding is important given Dare to Explore's focus on embedding reading in fun.

Mean response = 3.99.

Figure 17: Dare to Explore has increased my child's enjoyment of reading.



5.3 What factors best predict increases in reading ability?

Dare to Explore impacted children and parents/caregivers in a number of different ways, including enjoyment of reading, confidence, and knowledge. The following analysis investigates how these different effects of Dare to Explore are related to observed increases in reading ability.

A multiple regression model was developed to understand what factors best predict, or best explain, the increases in reading ability associated with Dare to Explore.

This analysis is important for two reasons. Firstly, it helps us understand the mechanisms through which Dare to Explore improved reading ability. Secondly, it highlights areas of focus for future programme improvement that are likely to have the greatest effect on reading ability.

A model was developed in two stages. The first stage involved investigating the relationship between changes in reading ability and a wide range of variables to investigate which variables were the strongest predictors of changes in reading ability. The second stage involved a more detailed investigation of the relationships amongst the variables identified as being important in stage one.

The following factors were identified in stage one as being significant predictors of changes in reading ability. Together these three factors explained 40% of the variance in reading ability, $R^2 = .40$, $F(3, 211) = 48.28$, $p^4 < .001$:

- whether children discovered and learned new things (referred to as *discovery*)
- whether parents/caregivers had increased confidence in their ability to help their children use the library to learn new things (referred to as *parent confidence*)
- whether children's enjoyment of reading increased (referred to as *enjoyment of reading*)

The following factors were found to be unrelated to changes in reading ability (i.e., they were non-significant predictors):

- child age
- child gender
- number of books read
- how much children learned about New Zealand
- whether children learned new ways to find information
- whether children had developed the confidence to look for information in new ways in the future
- whether the library was friendly and welcoming
- whether the library was a good place to learn together
- whether the librarians were knowledgeable and willing to help

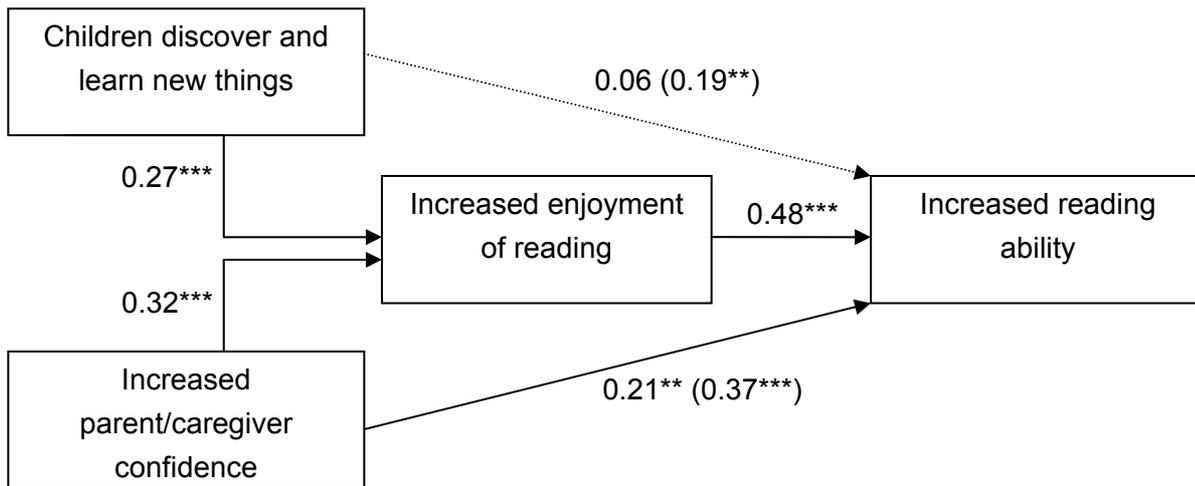
The stage two analysis took the three significant predictors of changes in reading ability and investigated the interrelationships among them.

The model showed that, on their own, discovery, parent confidence, and enjoyment were all significant, direct predictors of increased reading ability (i.e., higher scores on each of these factors were associated with greater improvements in reading ability).

We wondered, however, whether increased enjoyment might be a by-product of both increased discovery and increased parent confidence and might act as an intermediary between these two factors and increased reading ability. We therefore tested whether enjoyment of reading might explain (i.e., statistically mediate) the relationship between these two factors and increased reading ability (Figure 18).

⁴ Probability values, or p values, tell us the probability of the relationship occurring simply by chance. That is, a p value of .05 tells us that there is a 5% chance that the observed relationship is not real and has simply occurred by chance.

Figure 18: Factors that contribute to increased reading ability.



Note. ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Numbers on the figure represent beta weights, β (see footnote below). Where there are two numbers associated with an arrow, numbers within brackets reflect the direct relationship (β weight), and numbers outside the bracket reflect the strength of relationship (β), when taking into account the mediating variable (increased enjoyment of reading).

The analysis showed that increased enjoyment of reading was a significant mediator of both relationships. This means that enjoyment of reading explained *why* discovery and parent confidence were positively related to increased reading ability. On its own, discovery was significantly related to both increased enjoyment of reading ($\beta^5 = 0.27$, $p < .001$) and increased reading ability ($\beta = 0.19$, $p < .01$). When accounting for the effect of discovery on enjoyment of reading, the relationship between discovery and reading ability was no longer significant, indicating that the relationship was fully mediated (explained) by increased enjoyment of reading (Sobel test = 3.48, $p < .001$).

Similarly, parent confidence was significantly related to both increased enjoyment of reading ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < .001$) and increased reading ability ($\beta = 0.37$, $p < .001$). When accounting for the effect of parent confidence on enjoyment of reading, the relationship between confidence and reading ability decreased in strength but was still significant, indicating that the relationship was partially mediated (explained) by increased enjoyment of reading (Sobel test = 4.03, $p < .001$). The fact that the relationship between parent confidence and reading ability remained significant indicates that parent confidence is related to reading ability for other reasons, in addition to increased enjoyment of reading.

Together, these findings indicate that participating in Dare to Explore both encouraged children to learn and discover new things, and increased parents'/caregivers' confidence to help their children find new information. Both of these factors contributed to an increase in children's enjoyment of reading, which in turn contributed to an increase in reading ability.

⁵ Beta weights, β , are a measure of strength of association between two variables. A positive beta means that as scores on one variable increase, scores on the second variable also increase. A negative beta means that as one score increases the other decreases.

5.4 Do parents'/caregivers' and children's reasons for wanting to participate impact on changes in reading ability?

Earlier sections showed that 80% of parents wanted their children to participate in Dare to Explore in order to maintain or increase their child's reading ability, and that 40% of children wanted to participate for the same reason.

Two analyses were conducted to test whether these motivations impacted on subsequent changes in children's reading ability. The first, using data from the parents' survey, looked at the effect of parents' motivation for Dare to Explore to maintain or increase their children's reading ability on subsequent increases in reading ability (as estimated by parents themselves). The second, using data from the children's survey, looked at children's self-reported motivation to increase their reading ability on their own estimates of how their reading changed during Dare to Explore.

5.4.1 The effect of parents'/caregivers' motivations

We tested (using a t -test⁶) whether there was any difference in ratings of children's reading improvements between parents who did vs. did not state they wanted their children to participate in Dare to Explore in order to help maintain or increase their child's reading ability.

The results show that parents who wanted their child to participate in Dare to Explore in order to maintain or increase their children's reading ability felt that their child's reading ($M = 3.78$ out of 5) increased significantly more than parents who did not state this motivation ($M = 3.52$ out of 5), $t(220) = -2.10, p = .04$.

This finding is important for two reasons:

1. It shows that parents/caregivers who wished to maintain or improve their children's reading ability did indeed see greater increases in their child's reading ability over the summer than those who were not explicitly motivated to participate in Dare to Explore for this reason. This may be because parents/caregivers with explicit reading ability motives may have encouraged their children to interact differently with the Dare to Explore materials than those parents/caregivers without such a motivation, perhaps emphasising the pure reading challenges over the less-reading-focused challenges.
2. Although there was a significant difference observed between those with and without an explicit reading ability motivation, even parents/caregivers without this motivation observed increases in their children's reading ability. This is important because it indicates that even if reading ability was not seen as a priority, Dare to Explore had a positive effect on maintaining and improving children's reading levels.

5.4.2 The effect of children's own motivations

A comparison (using a t -test) of perceived increases in reading ability for children who did vs. did not state they wanted to participate in Dare to Explore because they wanted to get better at reading.

⁶ A t -test is a statistical test of differences between (mean scores of) two groups.

The results show that children who wanted to get better at reading reported that Dare to Explore helped more with their reading over the summer ($M = 2.75$ out of 3) than children who did not report wanting to get better at reading ($M = 2.33$ out of 3), $t(234.62) = -6.01$, $p < .001$.

This shows that when children wanted to participate in Dare to Explore to get better at reading they were more likely to feel that the programme had helped their reading.

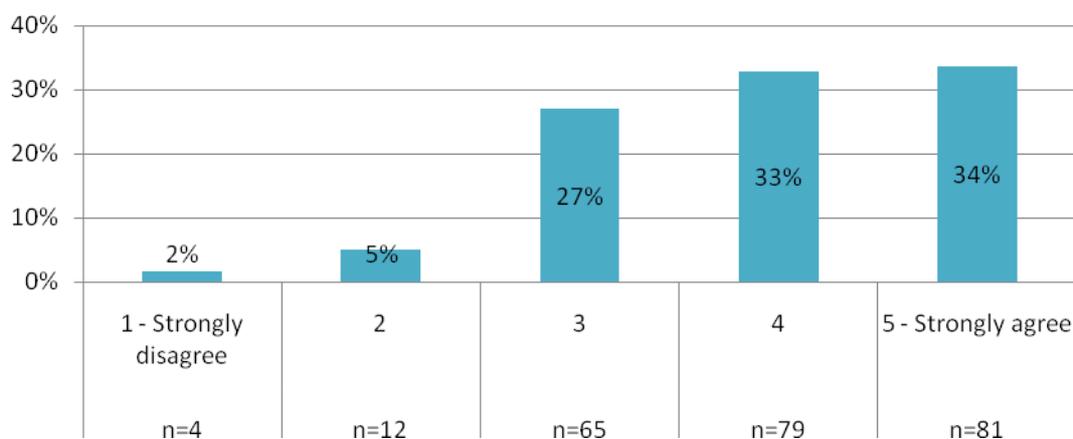
6.0 Family engagement with the library

6.1 Did parents/caregivers become more confident about helping their children to use the library to learn new things?

Two thirds (66%) of parents/caregivers agreed (selected 4 or 5) that as a result of participating in Dare to Explore, they felt more confident about helping their children to use the library to learn new things.

Mean response = 3.92.

Figure 19: I feel more confident about helping my child/ren to use the library to learn new things.



6.2 Did children like going to the library more as a result of Dare to Explore?

Children were asked whether Dare to Explore made them like going to the library more. Most children (80%) responded that that they like going to the library either a lot more or a little more.

Table 10: Has Dare to Explore made you like going to the library more?

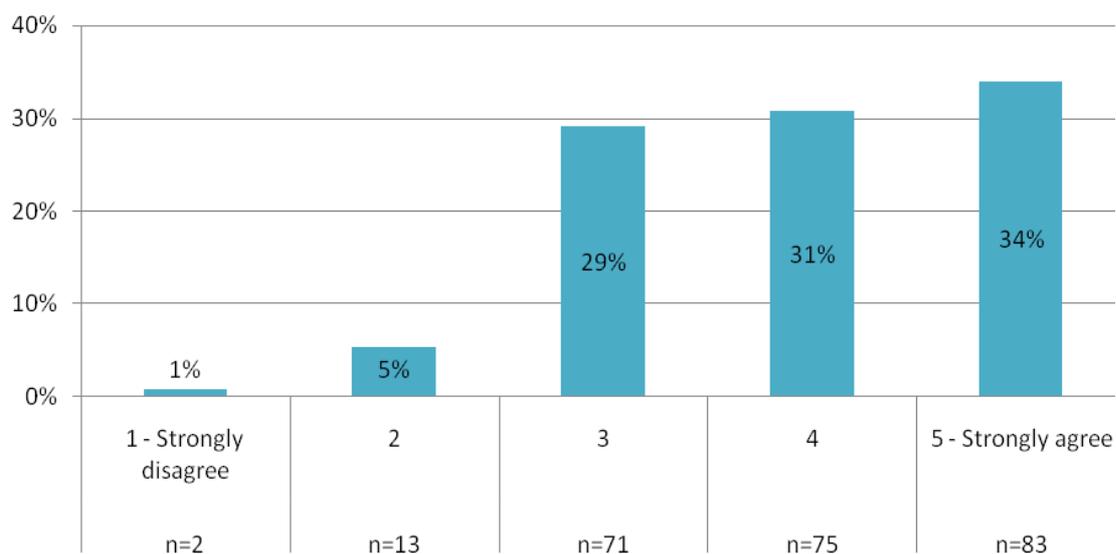
	<i>N</i>	%
No	1	0.4
I like going about the same	46	19.5
Yes, a little bit more	58	24.6
Yes, a lot more	131	55.5

6.3 Were families likely to visit the library more often as a result of Dare to Explore?

Nearly two thirds (65%) of parents/caregivers agreed (selected 4 or 5) that, because of Dare to Explore, they and their children were likely to visit the library more often in 2013 than they have in the past.

Mean response = 3.92.

Figure 20: Because of Dare to Explore, my child/ren and I are likely to visit the library more often in 2013 than we have in the past.



6.4 What were the strongest predictors of visiting the library more in 2013?

A multiple regression model was developed to better understand what factors predict whether families are likely to visit the library more in 2013.

The following factors were included in the model as predictors:

- how much children learned about New Zealand
- whether children’s enjoyment of reading increased
- whether parents/caregivers had increased confidence in their ability to help their children use the library to learn new things
- whether the library was a good place to learn together
- whether the librarians were knowledgeable and willing to help
- whether children’s reading ability increased
- child age
- child gender

- number of books read
- whether children discovered and learned new things
- whether children learned new ways to find information
- whether children had developed the confidence to look for information in new ways in the future
- whether the library was friendly and welcoming

Overall, the model was a significant predictor of increased likelihood of visiting the library in 2013, $F(13, 160) = 11.71, p < .001$. The model predicted 45% of the variance in reported likelihood of visiting the library, $R^2 = .45$.

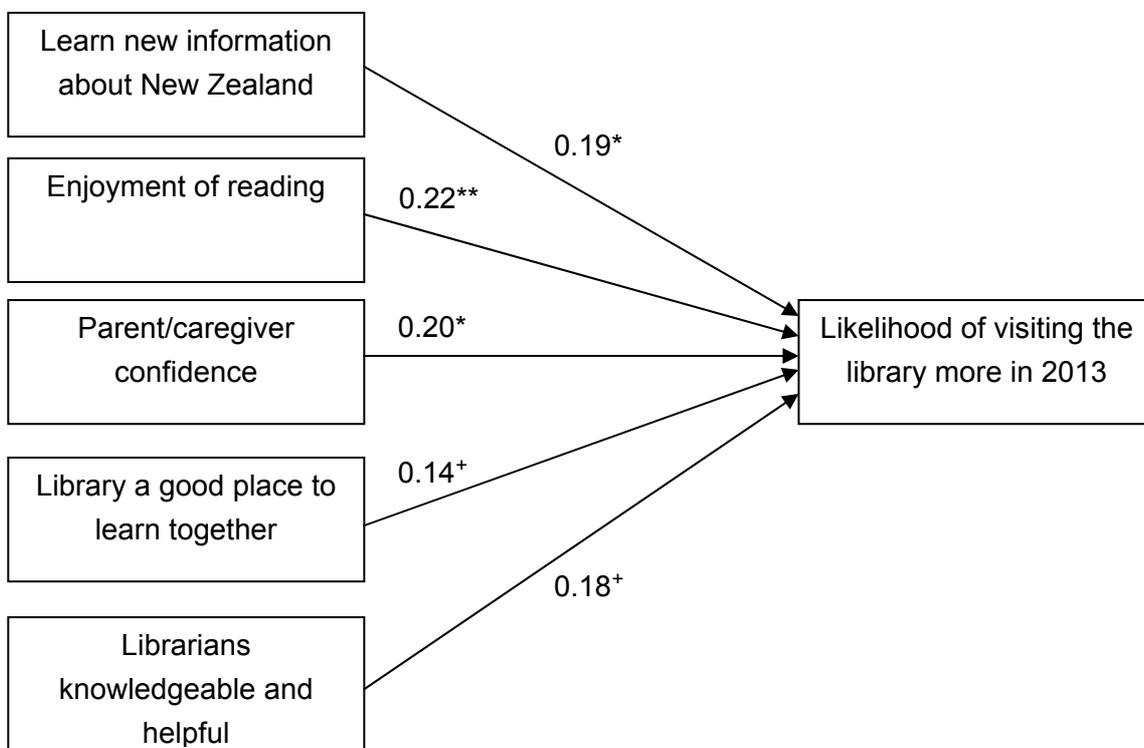
Figure 21 below shows the significant predictors of increased likelihood of visiting the library (non-significant predictors were included in the model, but are excluded from the figure).

The following factors were significant predictors of increased library use in the coming year:

- how much children learned about New Zealand
- whether children’s enjoyment of reading increased
- whether parents/caregivers had increased confidence in their ability to help their children use the library to learn new things
- whether the library was a good place to learn together
- whether the librarians were knowledgeable and willing to help

Future efforts (in the context of a reading programme) to increase library visitation may wish to focus on the following factors.

Figure 21: Factors that contribute to increased library use in the coming year.



Note. $^+p < .10, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001$

7.0 The library and librarians

7.1 How friendly and welcoming were the libraries?

A striking 98% of parents/caregivers agreed (selected 4 or 5) that the library was friendly and welcoming.

Mean response = 4.77.

Table 11: Library is friendly and welcoming.

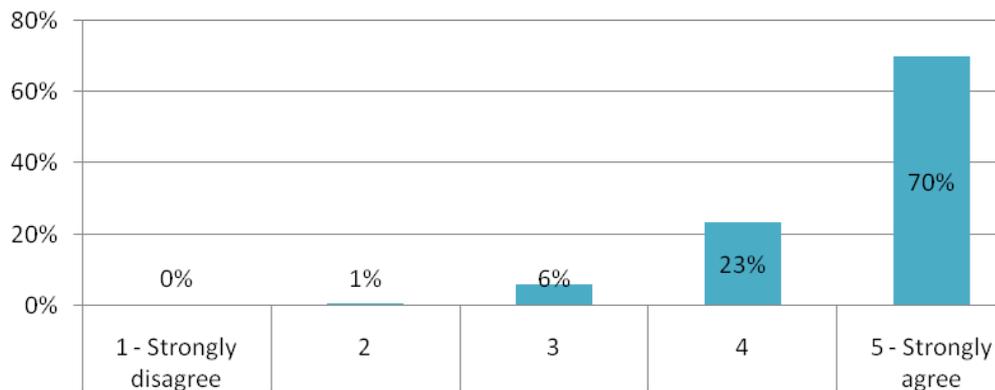
	<i>N</i>	%
1 - Strongly disagree	1	0.4
2	0	0
3	5	2.0
4	42	17.1
5 - Strongly agree	197	80.4

7.2 Were libraries seen as a good place for families to learn together?

Most parents/caregivers (93%) also agreed (selected 4 or 5) with the statement that the library was a good place for them and their children to learn together.

Mean response = 4.62

Figure 22: The library was a good place for me and my child/ren to learn together.



7.3 Were librarians seen as knowledgeable and willing to help?

Consistent with the findings above, 97% of parents/caregivers agreed (selected 4 or 5) that the librarians at the library that they attended most were knowledgeable and willing to help.

Mean response = 4.75.

Table 12: The librarians at this library were knowledgeable and willing to help.

	<i>N</i>	%
1 - Strongly disagree	1	0.4
2	1	0.4
3	6	2.5
4	43	17.6
5 - Strongly agree	193	79.1

7.4 What comments did people make about the librarians?

Parents and caregivers were asked what comments they would make regarding the librarians who assisted them with Dare to Explore. Comments were overwhelmingly positive with words like nice, friendly, helpful, encouraging and welcoming featuring frequently.

“Having such wonderful fun and friendly librarians is a huge support for parents. Having regular free events run by someone who competently and kindly supports children’s learning via fun and friendliness lightens the load for parents and gives me a huge boost. Nice to see my children having fun and enjoying learning. Thank you! Parenting can be lonely – it is nice to see other people also in a relaxed, fun context for our whole family.”

“They were so enthusiastic and encouraging towards his achievements. They took time to look at what he’d done. It wasn’t until prize giving that I realised how many children they must have done this for - it would have been quite an effort.”

“Fabulous!! So willing to help, and great with children, with great ability to recommend and find books good for my children. Really give my children a feeling of confidence in finding their way around the library and enjoying being there.”

This positive feedback was reinforced by the fact that library staff featured prominently in responses to a question about what parents and caregivers like most about Dare to Explore.

“I loved seeing the boys interact with the librarians and talk about books”

“As a parent I appreciated the support the library staff gave when we checked in”

“The hugely positive interactions between all librarians and the children. Not only the children’s librarians, but all the staff we encountered, treated the children with a level of respect and dignity that they don’t often encounter outside of child specific locations”

“it’s the reporting in with our local librarian Erica Clarke which I value the most. Having my child get experience talking about what they read, why they liked it, what they learned is such a great learning experience”

Only ten negative statements about librarians were made. Most of this feedback focused on the perception that some librarians were not as informed about or engaged with the programme as others. One parent mentioned that they would have liked to have been proactively invited to join

the programme, rather than having to enquire about it. Some parents and caregivers wrote about the difficulty of getting time with the librarians, who had large numbers of children to deal with:

“They were not readily available to assist. We often left without getting a chance to talk to any of them (volunteers did not have the necessary knowledge to assist)”

“During activity times it would help to have at least 2 librarians on to supervise the children's activities and also to complete Dare to Explore reading and activity checks.”

This feedback was supported by responses to questions about what could be improved – a few parents mentioned that there were often long waits for time with a librarian:

“had to wait around a lot to get a librarian's attention - I know they were busy doing their usual jobs. Might be good to bring in some volunteers to chat with the kids and spend more time with them”

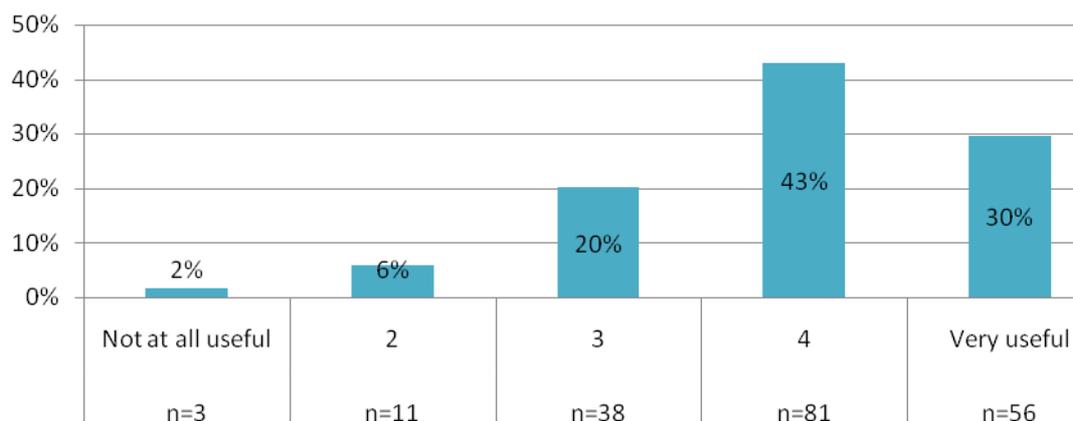
“We had to wait a long time for a librarian to be available each time we checked in. This was tough for both kids (one of my children has special needs and it was particularly hard for him). Other kids also were having trouble waiting. Perhaps there could be the option to make a specific appointment time?”

8.0 Website and party

8.1 How useful was the Auckland Libraries website?

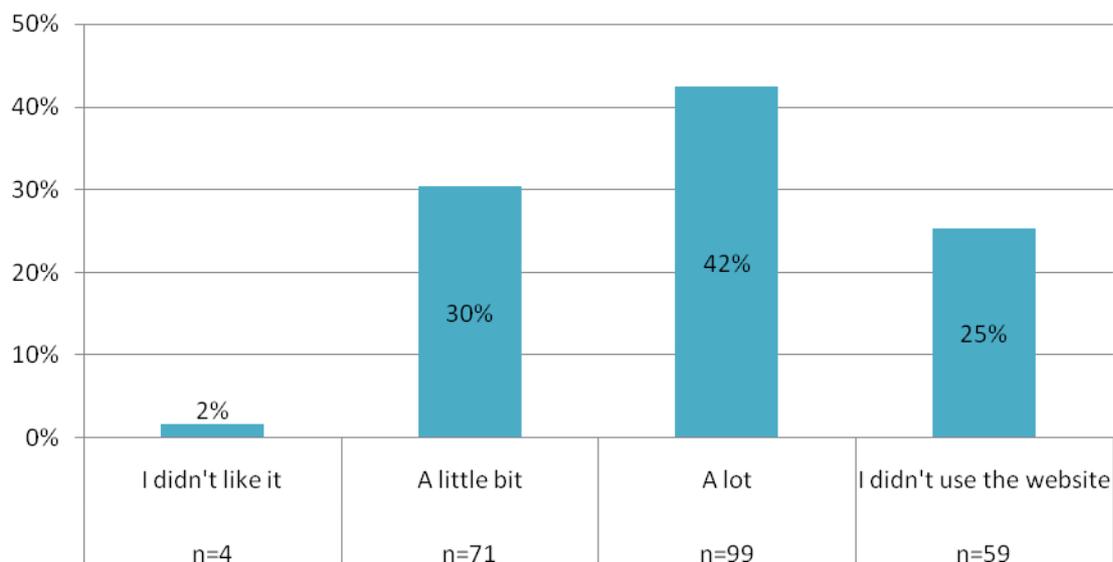
Parents/caregivers who used the Dare to Explore web pages on the Auckland Libraries website were asked how they would rate the web pages in terms of usefulness. Nearly three quarters (73%) reported finding the website useful (selected 4 or 5).

Figure 23: For those who DID use the Dare to Explore web pages on the Auckland Libraries website, how would you rate the web pages?



A quarter of children reported that they didn't use the Dare to Explore website. Most children (73%) reported that they used the website and liked it either a lot or a little bit.

Figure 24: If you used the Dare to Explore website, how much did you like it?



8.2 Why didn't parents/caregivers use the website?

Those who did not use the Dare to Explore web pages on the Auckland Libraries website were asked why. Very few of the reasons given by parents/caregivers related to issues with the website itself:

"a little difficult to navigate and search engine didn't always take you to what you were expecting"

"I couldn't log in the dare to explore website"

"tried once for the online quiz but couldn't access it"

"we found trying to find things on the Auckland website a bit of a challenge. To find book lists on the web site it needs to be easier to use, especially so the kids can find the list easier"

There was a wide variety of responses to this question. Many parents reported that they wanted to avoid the computer and internet over the holidays or they preferred to improve their familiarity with other resources, particularly books and the physical libraries:

"because they have to learn and try to know the things in the library"

"Child young and trying to grow her interest in books not computer (she has heaps of interest in the computer already!)"

"try to stay off computer when the sun is shining"

Other reasons given included the sufficiency of other resources, a lack of interest, a lack of time or 'didn't get round to it', a lack of access to a computer or internet (especially for those who were away from home for the holidays), and young children who were unable to use the website alone. Six of the 67 parents/caregivers who responded to this question reported that they did not know about the Dare to Explore website.

8.3 Suggested improvements to the website

When asked what could be done to improve Dare to Explore, some parents and caregivers suggested changes for Dare to Explore's web presence. Suggestions included a Facebook page, an online calendar of events or email reminders for events, and to make the website easier to navigate, especially for younger children.

"the online challenges - we tried to access the online digital quiz but search engine couldn't find it"

"some of the on-line stuff was hard for the kids to work out"

“Make sure all libraries put their events on the online calendars - some were missing. Useful to be able to see what’s on around our area, and plan visits for days when events are on.”

“Last year, we were sent emails reminding us of the activities coming up. This year that didn’t happen and we didn’t attend any as we simply forgot about them. So a weekly email would have been great.”

8.4 Party attendance

Parents/caregivers were asked whether they went to the party at the end of Dare to Explore. The vast majority (88%) did attend, although we note that some libraries asked parents/caregivers to fill out this survey at the parties, and so the attendance numbers may be somewhat overestimated.

Table 13: Did you go to the party at the end of Dare to Explore?

	N	%
Yes	216	88.2
No	27	11.0
I don’t know / I don’t remember	2	0.8

Parents/caregivers who did not attend the party were asked why. The most common reasons given were that parents were working, children or the whole family were away on holiday, and conflicting engagements such as swimming lessons and birthday parties. One parent mentioned that the date of the party fell in the middle of a long weekend, which was inconvenient, and a couple of parents mentioned that their child had not wanted to attend as he or she had not completed many of the activities. The most detailed response gave a number of reasons for non-attendance:

“Several reasons. My 6 year would have liked the entertainment, but my 10 year said it [w]as more for little kids. Mainly we didn’t attend due to it being held so far away from us, and because I did not want my children rewarded with lollies and junk food - this isn’t what I am trying to teach the kids.”

There were several responses to the open-ended questions that described the party as more suitable for younger children than older children.

“end party not good for 7+ years”

“I think the party was aimed at little kids.”

When asked whether there was anything more they would like to tell us about Dare to Explore, some parents and caregivers commented that the timing of the party did not suit them. Parties around 5 or 6 in the evening were perceived as too late for families with very young children.

9.0 Strengths and areas for improvement

9.1 Overall rating of Dare to Explore

Children were asked how many stars they would give Dare to Explore. Most (79%) rated it as 'awesome'; a small percentage rated it 'ok' (21%); almost no children ($n = 2$) rated Dare to Explore 'boring'.

Table 14: How many stars would you give Dare to Explore?

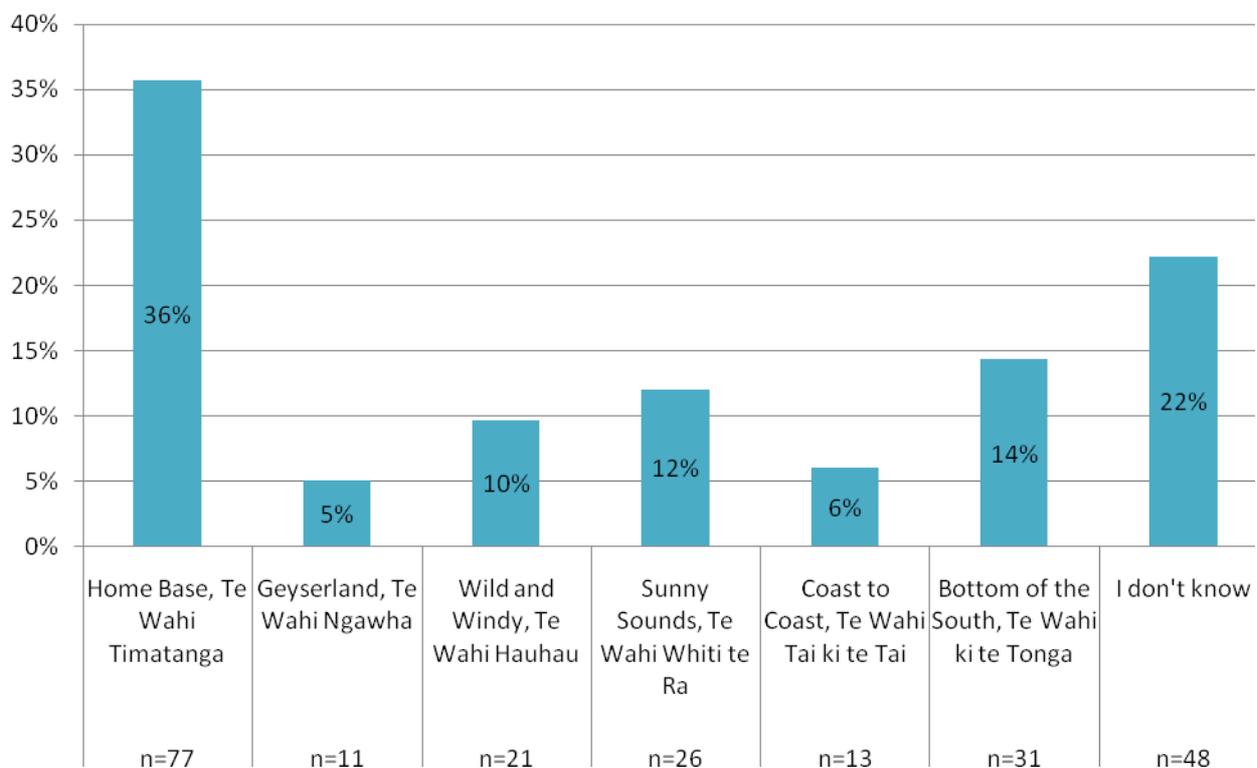
	N	%
Boring (1 star)	2	0.8
Ok (2 stars)	49	20.5
Awesome (3 stars)	188	78.7

9.2 Children's favourite challenges

Children were asked what their favourite challenge was. The most popular challenge was Home Base, Te Wāhi Timatanga.

Note, the numbers below are for only those children who selected one challenge – many children selected more than one favourite. Because many children misread the question/instructions – and because many children may have only completed Home Base – these data may be unreliable.

Figure 25: My favourite challenge was...



9.3 Do children and parents/caregivers want to participate again next year?

A total of 96% of parents agreed (selected 4 or 5) that they will encourage their children to participate in Dare to Explore again next year, with most (82%) strongly agreeing.

Mean response = 4.78

Table 15: I will encourage my children to participate next year.

	<i>N</i>	%
1 - Strongly disagree	0	0
2	0	0
3	9	3.7
4	36	14.7
5 - Strongly agree	200	81.6

Children were asked if they will do Dare to Explore next year. Just over three quarters (76%) said they would, with most of the remainder unsure (22%).

Table 16: Will you do Dare to Explore next year?

	<i>N</i>	%
Yes	183	76.3
No	4	1.7
I'm not sure	53	22.1

9.4 Strengths

Parents and caregivers were asked what they liked most about Dare to Explore. The most common theme of their responses was reading. Many wrote about the fact that Dare to Explore encouraged their child to read:

“during school holidays my kids enjoy watching TV and play games but this programme encourages them to do some reading during school holidays”

“gets the children to work toward a common goal and encourages my reluctant reader to make an effort to read”

Others talked about the effect of the programme on their child’s reading ability:

“encourages reading right through the holidays so my child can continue to read/keep up to same level”

“My child's reading ability improved so much over the holidays because of the Dare to Explore program.”

A number of parents and caregivers liked that their children were encouraged to read every day.

When writing about the reading, challenges and activities, and of the programme in general, parents and caregivers highlighted the following qualities most frequently: varied, flexible, fun and interesting.

*“Fun! Lots of varied tasks. We could choose our favourites and spend time together
Lots of choice of fun activities to do.”*

*“The broad range of activities that suited all learning styles. They were fun and inspiring -
encouraging kids to really get into all the things that books and the New Zealand summer
have to offer.”*

“creative activities that promotes reading while having fun”

“The programme was well thought & interesting”

Aspects of variety that were mentioned by parents included that the challenges and activities were suitable for children of different ages, with different interests, skills and learning styles, could be done in different locations, and required different resources.

“variety of challenges inside and out and on and offline”

*“that each of the sections had a range of activities suited to a range of ages. It included
different types of media and encouraged research and making as well as reading.”*

*“I liked the variety of the activities it offered and that there was specifically something for
everyone, a 5 year old could find tasks for herself as well as a 15 year old”*

*“The huge range of interesting, varied and educational activities, from reading tasks, to
creative thinking tasks, to construction, writing, drawing...”*

“wide variety of activities which appealed to different children’s interests and abilities”

Related to the theme of variety was that of choice and flexibility. A number of parents appreciated that their children could choose which and how many activities and challenges to do as well as which and how many books to read.

“being able to pick and choose challenges”

“could do as much or as little as they wanted”

“flexibility of what & when to do things”

“children can choose the books they like and read more on holiday”

Other factors mentioned by parents and caregivers included the party, the treasure/scavenger hunt, the theme (New Zealand), the opportunity to mix with others, visiting different libraries, and various features of the material that was given to children when they signed up for the programme (the passport, the reading/book lists, the fact that all worksheets/activities were contained in a single booklet and were presented in advance).

Children who participated in Dare to Explore were asked to write what they thought was the best part of Dare to Explore. The most frequently mentioned aspects of the programme were the challenges and reading:

"I thought the best part of dare to explore was the activities and reading the awesome books"

"doing challenges and reading everyday"

The party was mentioned by several children, many of whom wrote specifically about receiving the invitation to the party:

"Getting invited to the party."

A number of children described the activities as the best part of Dare to Explore. Activities involving arts and crafts were the most frequently mentioned; a lot of children wrote about making a snowflake and kites.

"making the activities projects at the library, and the drawing that was required in the challenges"

"I like reading, but the most wonderful experience is making works with my hands, painting and go to the library for activities"

"When we made kites!"

"I liked doing the snowflakes!"

Other aspects of the programme mentioned frequently by children were the treasure hunt, jandal throwing and the stickers and stamps.

As with the parent and caregiver surveys, 'fun' was mentioned frequently by children.

Parents and caregivers were also asked whether there was anything more they would like to tell us about Dare to Explore. Responses to this question were very positive, focusing on how much they and their children had enjoyed the programme.

"we don't have much spare money to spend on holiday activities for our children so such a high quality free programme that is fun and extends our children's learning makes a positive difference for our family."

"loved that my son had to discuss his challenges with a librarian - it took him out of his comfort zone"

"It was a fantastic experience and made us work together as a family for some activities which was fun."

"My two children are very different - one a very keen reader, the other one just starting to get into reading by himself. The different types of challenges meant that there was plenty for both of them to participate in"

"I cannot say how much I appreciate the library. There is no way we could afford to keep our child in books (and this is a household where books and bookshelves are considered a basic necessity) and we love the library. Don't let those "3" answers put you off. We already love you and didn't need Dare to Explore to discover what you have to offer."

9.5 Areas for improvement

Parents and caregivers were asked what could be done to improve Dare to Explore. The most common response was 'nothing'.

"I think it was a great programme and can't think of how to improve it"

"nothing - well setup and organised and librarians put a lot of effort into the activities and increasing the children's love of reading"

"Nothing, I am always impressed that things are kept interesting each year with new things"

These sentiments were reinforced in the children's survey. When asked "Is there anything else you would like to tell us about Dare to Explore?" most children took the opportunity to state how much they had enjoyed the programme.

"it was awesome. I enjoyed all the challenges"

"I love it so so much"

"It's really fun and it helped me do a lot more reading and I can't wait till next year!!"

The area for improvement mentioned most frequently by parents and caregivers was the need to provide differently for children of different age groups. Parents and caregivers asked for separate activities and challenges for different age groups and for the programme to be modified to allow for under-fives to participate as well.

"maybe break it into age groups within the programme - some of the tasks were a bit advanced for my 5 year old "

"have a mini version for under 5's (or 5 and under) younger siblings feel left out."

"I found it wasn't that interesting for my older children (10+) - maybe have different challenges for them"

Catering better for different age groups was also something that children wrote about in their survey responses:

"Next time I think that you should do different challenges for different ages and different subjects for young kids and for older kids"

"You should split the age groups and not have one group doing challenges otherwise for the older kids it will be boring. For example me I thought the challenges were OK but a few of them I would recommend for younger kids."

"The whole thing is aimed at ages 5-8. I think for older people just make them read every day."

"If you can divide some activities in groups so bigger children can do bigger things this will be perfect"

"Can you please make another programme for older kids as there are still the odd number of kids out there that can't join because they are too old."

A number of parents and caregivers wrote about a need for more activities and challenges, but others wrote that they were confused and overwhelmed by the number of activities.

"there are a lot of challenges/activities though whilst we were busy over holidays. Maybe a few less? Hard to keep up!"

"Make the booklet simpler - it did seem a bit overloaded with content, certainly plenty of challenges to keep them busy but to the point of being a bit overwhelming and tricky to follow"

Increased advertising was mentioned by several parents and caregivers. In many cases they suggested increasing the information about the programme provided in schools:

"perhaps more advertising? Information going out in the school newsletter or an email from the library?"

"getting teachers to talk about it in schools or getting parents to sign up before the holidays"

Another common theme in parent and caregiver responses to this question was reading. Areas of suggested improvement included changes to the reading lists, increasing the focus on reading (and decreasing the focus on activities) in the programme, increasing rewards for reading and integrating activities and reading (i.e. reading required for some activities and challenges).

"more room for the reading log and more incentive to read books i.e. challenges involving reading a certain number of books."

"kids used to get little gifts at each report in. weekly report ins to keep the momentum. Larger reading lists and the option to read a book that isn't on the list to still achieve a challenge. The way it was set up this year, even if my child read 6 books in one week, she wouldn't have achieved any challenges"

"Make the reading something that gets ticked off. It's too easy for child to focus on activities and forget about doing reading."

“Reward reading more. My son was not so interested in the challenges but read a great deal and only had the footprints to colour in as a reward for all his reading which didn't lead to a tangible reward.”

“more specific list of reading broken down into age groups (eg 5-8, 9-12 etc) wouldn't mind some worksheets/activities that's related to a few books (to encourage comprehension)”

This feedback, however, should be interpreted in light of the numerous positive comments about the balance Dare to Explore struck between reading and fun.

10.0 Conclusions and recommendations

In this section we summarise the results of this evaluation in relation to the four evaluation questions and outline our broad recommendations for how to improve future evaluations of Dare to Explore.

10.1 Did Dare to Explore encourage learning and discovery among children?

Responses to the survey suggest that Dare to Explore was successful in encouraging learning and discovery among children:

- Three quarters (77%) of parents/caregivers agreed (selected 4 or 5) with the statement 'Dare to Explore encouraged my child/ren to discover and learn new things'.
- Some of this learning and discovery related to the theme of Dare to Explore II – New Zealand. Just over half (53%) of parents/caregivers reported that their child had acquired some new knowledge about New Zealand. Most (93%) children reported that they had learnt something about New Zealand.
- Another aspect of learning and discovery encouraged by Dare to Explore was in relation to methods for finding information. Three quarters (75%) of parents/caregivers reported that their children had learnt a new way to find information. Most children (90%) responded that Dare to Explore had helped them learn new ways to do things in the library on their own.

10.2 Did Dare to Explore maintain or improve children's literacy?

The evaluation of Dare to Explore's effect on reading relies on the subjective judgement of parents/caregivers and children and should therefore be treated as indicative. Nevertheless the very positive responses of parents/caregivers and children suggest that Dare to Explore was effective in improving or at least maintaining children's literacy:

- The majority (57%) of parents/caregivers felt that their children's reading ability either improved a little or a lot, while 42% felt their children's reading ability did not change during Dare to Explore. Almost no parents (1%) felt that their children's reading ability got worse during Dare to Explore (scored 0 or 1).
- Almost all children reported that Dare to Explore had improved their reading either a little bit (45%) or a lot (45%).

Statistical modelling showed that increased enjoyment of reading was an important means through which Dare to Explore contributed to improvements in children's reading ability.

10.3 Did Dare to Explore encourage family engagement with the library?

These factors suggest Dare to Explore was successful in encouraging family engagement with the library:

- Two thirds (66%) of parents/caregivers agreed (selected 4 or 5) that as a result of participating in Dare to Explore, they felt more confident about helping their children to use the library to learn new things.
- Most children responded that Dare to Explore made them like going to the library either a lot more (56%) or a little more (25%).
- Nearly two thirds (65%) of parents/caregivers agreed (selected 4 or 5) that, because of Dare to Explore, they and their children were likely to visit the library more often in 2013 than they have in the past.

10.4 How could Dare to Explore be improved in the future?

A reading of all responses and feedback provided by parents/caregivers and children leads us to recommend the following ways to improve Dare to Explore:

- Cater better for different age groups and abilities
- Better recruitment of underrepresented groups
- Increased advertising and information
- Make the parties more inclusive for older children
- More librarians to provide time with children
- Improve Dare to Explore's web presence

These suggestions are expanded below.

10.4.1 Cater better for different age groups and abilities

While a number of parents/caregivers and children commented positively that Dare to Explore provided something for children of all abilities, some comments suggested that Dare to Explore could better cater for different age groups and ability levels.

It is suggested therefore that clearer guidance could be provided to children and their parents/caregivers on which challenges are appropriate for different ability levels, so that children can select the challenges best suited to their ability.

10.4.2 Better recruitment of underrepresented groups

Registration data showed that Māori and Pasifika families were less likely than other ethnic groups to register for and participate in Dare to Explore. Given the (on average) lag in literacy

development seen in children from these communities, it is likely that Māori and Pasifika would benefit greatly from participating in Dare to Explore.

Greater effort therefore needs to be made to encourage these communities to participate. Insofar as those most in need may be less likely to have an existing relationship with a local library, recruitment for Dare to Explore should be conducted in additional areas outside of libraries (e.g., through schools and communities).

10.4.3 Increased advertising and information

Results showed that the majority of participants heard about Dare to Explore either directly from Auckland Libraries or because they had participated in a previous summer reading programme.

Fewer than 20% of parents/caregivers heard about Dare to Explore from any other source. This highlights an opportunity to increase the audience for Dare to Explore. The most natural means of wider communication is through schools, and indeed a number of parents/caregivers commented that they would have liked more information through their child's school.

Using alternative advertising methods reflects not only a valuable opportunity for Auckland Libraries to broaden their 'audience', but also a way to reach those most in need. Wider recruitment strategies that don't rely on pre-existing relationships with a local library may contribute to addressing the underrepresentation of these groups.

10.4.4 Make the parties more inclusive for older children

A number of comments from both children and parents/caregivers indicated that the party was seen as less appropriate for older children. Consideration should be given to how the party can be made more relevant for older children.

10.4.5 More librarians to provide time with children

While the libraries and librarians were rated extremely positively by respondents, some parents/caregivers commented that at times they had to wait a long time to interact with the librarians.

As Dare to Explore continues to grow it may be necessary to have additional librarians available to help and interact with children involved in Dare to Explore.

10.4.6 Improve Dare to Explore's web presence

Only eight per cent of parents/caregivers heard about Dare to Explore through the Auckland Libraries website, and a number of comments indicated that both children and parents/caregivers

had difficulty using the Dare to Explore website. These findings indicate that there is scope for Dare to Explore's web presence to be improved.

In addition to making the Dare to Explore website more accessible, specific suggestions for improvement included improving the accessibility of 'what's on' information, through weekly email reminders and social media (Facebook, Twitter etc.).

10.5 Recommendations to improve future evaluations

There are a number ways that future attempts to evaluate Dare to Explore can be improved. The following recommendations focus on improving recruitment methods and the type of data collected. We believe that implementing these suggestions will improve the accuracy and representativeness of the findings.

10.5.1 Recruit survey respondents independent of libraries

The present evaluation relied on libraries and librarians encouraging parents/caregivers and children to complete surveys at the end of Dare to Explore. There are two disadvantages associated with this recruitment method. The first is that libraries that were more active and successful in delivering Dare to Explore are also more likely to be successful in encouraging parents/caregivers and children to fill out surveys. The second is that by asking only individuals who were still engaged with Dare to Explore at the end of the programme to complete a survey, the results are likely to miss individuals who dropped out of Dare to Explore before the end of the programme.

Together, these limitations mean that results are likely to be biased to some degree toward those families who were most satisfied and engaged with Dare to Explore.

The disadvantages above could be avoided, and the recruitment of survey respondents could be made more robust by using registration data to recruit respondents and to do so independently of libraries and librarians.

We therefore suggest that future evaluations use contact details collected on registration forms (postal and/or email addresses) to send a random selection of Dare to Explore participants invitations to provide feedback (or to participate in focus groups or interviews if these are required).

Demographic information recorded on the registration forms can also be used to oversample specific groups (e.g., Māori and Pasifika) if this is seen as advantageous or necessary.

10.5.2 Increase the sample size

The sample sizes of the surveys in this evaluation, while reasonable at approximately 250 for both parents/caregivers and children, represent a relatively small percentage of the total registrations. The accuracy of the findings could be increased by increasing the sample size.

We anticipate that adopting the recruitment method suggested above will make it easy to increase the sample sizes (by contacting a greater proportion of Dare to Explore participants).

10.5.3 Focus more on recruiting underrepresented groups

The ethnicity data recorded on the present surveys show that fewer Māori, Indian and Samoan individuals filled out the survey than we would expect from looking at the registration data. There is a need therefore to ensure that the views of these groups are better reflected in future feedback.

This problem may be solved by adopting the registration form recruitment strategy suggested in Section 10.5.1. As mentioned above, registration data would also allow over sampling of specific populations as a way of increasing the 'voice' of these groups. Recruitment of underrepresented groups may also be enhanced by using social networks to distribute surveys via community leaders and community workers.

10.5.4 Make use of standardised student achievement data

One of the primary aims of Dare to Explore was to maintain or improve children's literacy levels. The data presented in this report indicate that Dare to Explore was successful in achieving this aim. However, the data are from subjective judgements made by parents/caregivers and children.

For various reasons (e.g., subjectivity of individual judgements, response bias, and difficulties associated with estimating reading ability), a truer picture of Dare to Explore's effect on literacy levels would be gained by making use of standardised reading assessment data collected by schools.

Most schools collect some form of standardised reading data (e.g., e-asTTle, STAR, PAT), both before and after the summer holiday period (at the end and the start of the academic years, respectively). These data provide an objective (although not perfect) assessment of children's reading ability.

Future evaluations would be greatly enhanced by using the data already collected by schools to evaluate changes in children's reading ability over the summer break. These data should be used to compare changes in reading ability for children who completed Dare to Explore with changes seen for non-participating children.

Data for non-participating children provides a valuable control group against which to compare changes seen within the Dare to Explore participants. The two groups should be matched where possible on demographic and socioeconomic factors (age, gender, ethnicity, SES etc.) to rule out as many possible confounding factors as possible.

Early contact with schools (prior to the summer holiday) and the provision of assistance to schools on how to extract the student achievement data is essential.

11.0 References

Alexander, K L, Entwisle, D R and Olson, L S (2007). Lasting consequences of the summer learning gap. *American Sociological Review*, 72, 167-180

Appendix A Questionnaire for parents/caregivers

Thank you for your time and participation in Dare to Explore. In this survey we're keen to learn more about your experiences of Dare to Explore.

Your comments will contribute to the continued improvement of the Auckland Libraries Summer Reading Adventure programmes we offer.

With your permission, your survey will go in the draw to win a pile of books tailored to your child's reading preferences.

1. How did you find out about Dare to Explore? *(please tick all that apply)*

- Auckland Libraries
- School
- Auckland Libraries Website
- My child/ren
- Children's friends or other parents
- Newspaper
- Participated in a library summer reading programme before
- Advertising in public places, e.g. Buses, trains
- Other _____

2. Why did you want your child/ren to participate? *(please tick all that apply)*

- To give my child/ren something to do over the holidays
- To maintain or increase my child/ren's reading skills
- To get additional support from a librarian with my child/ren's reading
- To get to know the library better
- Other _____

3. What did you like most about Dare to Explore? _____

4. What could we do to improve Dare to Explore? _____

5. Where did you do Dare to Explore? *(please tick all that apply)*

- At home
- In the library
- Online
- At the place we were staying for the holidays (other than home)
- Other _____

If you had more than one child participating in Dare to Explore, please answer questions 6 to 14 for the child who completed the most/least challenges.

6. Please tell us the following information about your child:

Age Gender Ethnicity Main language at home

7. How many of the challenge sets did your child complete? *(please tick all that apply)*

- Dare to Explore... Home Base, Te Wāhi Timatanga
- Dare to Explore... Geyserland, Te Wāhi Ngāwhā
- Dare to Explore... Wild and Windy, Te Wāhi Hauhau
- Dare to Explore... Sunny Sounds, Te Wāhi Whiti te Rā
- Dare to Explore... Coast to Coast, Te Wāhi Tai ki te Tai
- Dare to Explore... Bottom of the South, Te Wāhi ki te Tongā
- I don't know

8. How many books did your child read during Dare to Explore?

- None 1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 20+

9. Dare to Explore encouraged my child to discover and learn new things. *(please circle one number that best represents your level of agreement with this statement)*

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

10. As a result of participating in Dare to Explore, what did your child learn about New Zealand?

No new knowledge 1 2 3 4 5 A lot of new knowledge

11. Did your child learn a new way to find information? (For example, finding things in the library, using books or a new website not seen before, asking a librarian for help, visiting a library or research centre to find information)

- Yes No I don't know/ I don't remember

12. My child will have the confidence to look for information in this way again, for example, when they return to school or visit the library again.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

13. How has your child's reading ability changed during Dare to Explore?

Got a lot worse 1 2 3 4 5 Improved a lot

14. Dare to Explore has increased my child's enjoyment of reading.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

15. As a result of participating in Dare to Explore, I feel more confident about helping my child/ren to use the library to learn new things.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

16. What was the main library you and your child/ren used for Dare to Explore?

17. This library was friendly and welcoming.
Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree
18. This library was a good place for me and my child/ren to learn together.
Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree
19. The librarians at this library were knowledgeable and willing to help.
Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree
20. What comments would you make regarding the librarians at this library who assisted you with Dare to Explore? _____
-
-

21. Because of Dare to Explore, my child/ren and I are likely to visit the library more often in 2013 than we have in the past.
Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree
22. For those who DID use the Dare to Explore web pages on the Auckland Libraries website: how would you rate the web pages?
Not at all useful 1 2 3 4 5 Very useful
23. For those who DID NOT use the Dare to Explore web pages on the Auckland Libraries website: why didn't you use the web pages? _____
-

24. Did you go to the party at the end of Dare to Explore?
 Yes
 No
 Don't know/ I don't remember
25. Why? _____
-

26. I will encourage my child/ren to participate in Dare to Explore again next year?
Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree
27. If there's anything more you would like to tell us about your experience of Dare to Explore, please do so here:
-
-

- I am happy to be contacted for further details and feedback
- I wish to go in the draw for a pile of children's books

Please provide your contact details below if you are happy to be contacted for further details and feedback.

The information you provide will not be used for any other purpose and will be kept separately from your questionnaire responses.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Contact Phone number: _____

Email address: _____

Thank you!

Please return this to your local library or post to Private Bag 92300, Auckland 1142



Appendix B Questionnaire for children

1. I am _____ years old

2. I heard about Dare to Explore ... *(tick as many as you like)*

- At the library
- At my school
- From my friends
- From my family
- By doing a library summer reading programme before

3. I joined Dare to Explore because ... *(tick as many as you like)*

- I wanted something to do over the holidays
- I wanted to get better at reading
- I like to come into the library
- It looked fun
- My family made me
- Some other reason – please write this here: _____

4. I did Dare to Explore ... *(tick as many as you like)*

- on my own
- with help from family
- with help from the librarians

5. I thought the BEST part of Dare to Explore was... _____

4. My favourite challenge was.... *(please tick ONE favourite)*

- Dare to Explore... Home Base, Te Wāhi Tīmatanga
- Dare to Explore... Geyserland, Te Wāhi Ngāwhā
- Dare to Explore... Wild and Windy, Te Wāhi Hauhau
- Dare to Explore... Sunny Sounds, Te Wāhi Whiti te Rā
- Dare to Explore... Coast to Coast, Te Wāhi Tai ki te Tai
- Dare to Explore... Bottom of the South, Te Wāhi ki te Tongā
- I don't know

5. How much did you learn about New Zealand? *(circle one answer)*

A lot

OR

A little bit

OR

Nothing

6. If you used the Dare to Explore website, how much did you like it? *(circle one answer)*
- A lot** OR **A little bit** OR **I didn't like it**
7. Has Dare to Explore made you like going to the library more? *(circle one answer)*
- Yes, a lot more** OR **Yes, a little bit more** OR **No**
8. Has Dare to Explore helped you learn new ways to do things in the library on your own? *(circle one answer)*
- Yes, a lot** OR **Yes, a little bit** OR **No**
9. Do you think Dare to Explore helped with your reading over the summer? *(circle one answer)*
- Yes, a lot** OR **Yes, a little bit** OR **No**
10. Will you do Dare to Explore next year *(circle one answer)*
- Yes** OR **No** OR **I'm not sure**
11. How many stars would you give Dare to Explore? *(circle one answer)*
- * 1 star is boring
 - ** 2 stars means it's okay
 - *** 3 stars is awesome

Thank you!

When you have finished, please return this to a librarian at your local library or post to Private Bag 92300, Auckland 1142

