

***Inter-generational education shown to be a key to tackling entrenched poverty and associated problems:***

*CPAG calls for more support for this kind of education in a press release 23/10/2006 <http://www.cpag.org.nz/news/cpag-news/nr1161665699.pdf>*

**Press release: City of Manukau Education Trust (COMET), October 2006.**

**“Dark Secret” of family violence**

Intergenerational family learning can address the “Dark Secret” of family violence. “We don’t need to design new programmes to address endemic family violence. There is plenty of evidence that high-intensity, integrated education programmes in mainstream schools and early childhood centres can successfully support families to function well and dig themselves out of a poverty trap” says the Chief Executive of the City of Manukau Education Trust (COMET), Bernardine Vester.

“The challenge is to beef up investment in programmes that already exist and demonstrate an on-the-ground difference to actual family functioning. The most dramatic changes in family dynamics can be achieved by engaging adults in learning alongside their children”, she says.

“The missing link is harnessing existing strengths in the education sector to social development resources. We need ongoing and substantial investment in intensive intergenerational education – but government agencies find it difficult to take a holistic approach to investing in education for families.”

COMET launched two publications in August that explore the policy gap in family learning. The first is a policy discussion on intergenerational family learning. The second outlines a successful existing programme model that builds adult literacy and parenting skills at the same time as building children’s achievement, providing new hope to families in poverty.

“It costs \$13,000 to engage a whole family in learning. It costs nearly \$12,000 to support one disengaged youth in an Alternative Education programme. It would be a far better investment for our community to spend \$1.3million on working with one hundred families, than spending money on public relations exercises to ‘engage families in learning’, or getting Wellington bureaucrats to write yet more reports about what governments might do about the tragic results of poverty and family dysfunction.” The adults who are participating in the pilot programmes in Manukau City speak powerfully of the ways in which their attendance at Family Literacy Programmes has changed their families:

Sherry: “Being on the family literacy programme has taught me how to have a conversation with my children. I shouted, and ordered them to do things before, I never explained why their behaviour was not okay.” Sherry is a 29-year-old Maori mother of three children, aged 9, 6 and 3 years.

Ofelia: “Before, I didn’t help with [my children’s] homework. Now I share with them. My children help me with my homework a lot, too!” Ofelia is a Samoan mother, aged 46 years, who has 4 children, aged 18, 13, 10 and 4 years.

Paea: I can understand my children better now, and their needs. I used to just yell at them before, and expect them to do what I say. Now me and my husband (who did the MFLP programme last year) know how to have a conversation with them.

I am so proud that my husband is doing a diploma of teaching course now, and he is encouraging me to think about it for next year.” Paea is Tongan, 37 years old, with 4 children aged 9, 7, 6, and 3 years.

“These families have found a new route out of poverty through participating in a full-time, high-intensity, professionally delivered education programme that offers them a pathway to a job, to a future, and to better family relationships. Targeting the educational achievements of adults in a family enables schools, early childhood centres, and social agencies to reach into the lives of children.

There is a Contents Preview of the two publications to be launched on the COMET website: [www.comet.org.nz](http://www.comet.org.nz)

The two new publications are called:

*A Tapestry of Understanding: Intergenerational Family Learning* and *Manukau Family Literacy Programmes: Intergenerational Family Learning in Practice.*