

# AMPLIFY Action Enquiry

## Report of Findings



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Funded by the Lotteries Community Sector Research Fund



# AMPLIFY Action Enquiry Report of Findings

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McLaren Park & Henderson South

Community Initiative



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# Contents

List of Figures	iv
Executive Summary	vi
Summary of Findings	vii
Summary of Recommendations	ix
Language used in this report	x
Limitations of this report	xi
Disclaimer	xi
Introduction	1
Background to the project	1
Purpose of the Research	2
Structure of the Report	2
Participants	3
Methods	4
Literature Review	6
Adolescence, Puberty and Brain Development	6
Early adolescence: 9 – 13 year olds	8
Approaches & Activities for Young People aged 9-13	11
Youth Development as Community Development	16
Research Approach	17
The importance of youth participation in evaluation	18
Engaging young people in evaluation	23
Ethical considerations	25
Research Findings	28
The recreation needs of young people aged 9-13	33
The needs of parents	35
Active and meaningful engagement	38
Recommendations	39
Responding to the needs of 9-13 year olds	39
Responding to the needs of parents	40
STUDIO MPHS - High Tech Youth Studio	41
Studio MPHS Statistics to May 2013	41
Actively and meaningfully engaging young people	42
Conclusion	44
Appendix 1: Demographics	45
Appendix 2: Forms	47
References	50

# List of Figures

Figure 1: AMPLIFY Theory of Change	vii
Figure 2: AMPLIFY Action Enquiry process	19
Figure 3: AMPLIFY Photovoice process	21
Figure 4: AMPLIFY SpeakOut process	26
Figure 5: Main forms of travel to and from school	31
Figure 6: Cool spaces and dumb spaces	32
Figure 7: Typical after-school activities (unprompted)	34
Figure 8: Preferred after-school activities	34
Figure 9: How young people want to be treated by adults	35

# Foreword

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Kia ora, Talofa lava, Fakaalofa lahi atu, Malo e leilei, Ki orana.

We are incredibly proud of this research and how young people in our community have stepped forward to help us understand their needs and aspirations. The Amplify project was developed to respond to our concerns about how some young people in our area struggle to transition successfully from childhood to adolescence. We want young people in McLaren Park Henderson South to feel connected, confident and skilful in ways which make them and their families proud. The recommendations in the report will inform our future strategies.

This report in many ways cuts through the negative statistics which often dominate the way young people in MPHS are viewed. This report gives them a stronger voice and reminds us that we can change the way we do things and make a difference.

Our hope is to inspire others to listen to what young people want and need, and to focus our attention on making a real difference for every young person who lives and grows up in MPHS now and in the future. This report is written to share our learnings of undertaking a research project with young people and their family and whānau. We invite you to take these findings back into your lives and apply it to your work.

We wish to thank the children, young people and their families from our community for their involvement and also our staff and dedicated research team and volunteers.

Noeline Davis  
Chairperson



McLaren Park and Henderson South Community Initiative Inc.



Finding your own pathway is hard,  
following others is easy

*(Photovoice)*

# Executive Summary

AMPLIFY is a 13-month action enquiry into the needs and best practice approaches for 9-13 year olds in the West Auckland suburbs of McLaren Park and Henderson South. The action enquiry was conducted by a team comprising representatives from McLaren Park Henderson South Community Initiative Inc. (MPHS), Point Research Ltd. and 70 local school pupils.

Much work is currently underway in the suburbs of McLaren Park and Henderson South ('the MPHS community') to engender a sense of community pride and belonging in the community. Accordingly, this collaborative action enquiry was conceived as a community action project, whereby researchers partnered with local 9-13 year olds in order to understand how to create innovative and effective neighbourhood communities that are responsive to their needs.

The three main questions which this collaborative action enquiry sought to address were:

1. What are the best practice and/or new practice approaches which are likely to result in positive outcomes for young people transitioning from pre-teen through to adolescence?
2. How can MPHS provide meaningful engagement to improve local young people's connectedness and wellbeing, particularly those with the greatest need not currently catered for by government programmes for working families?

3. How can the MPHS community work together to ensure new initiatives for young people are effective, innovative, collaborative and sustainable whilst building the community's capacity to consider the new emerging evidence from this project?

Findings from the action enquiry have been fed back to MPHS and local schools throughout the project so they may be acted on. In addition to this, the best practice approaches articulated by the young people who took part in this project formed part of the research process, that is, in working with young people the researchers were privileged to see first-hand the practices that were most likely to positively engage them and were able to respond accordingly. The research process was itself, therefore, a form of community intervention with its own sets of impacts and outcomes.

This project has been framed by an understanding that the realities of these young people are shaped by the adult world in which they live. They are, for example, 50 per cent more likely to be parented by a single parent, more likely to come from a low income

household, and more likely to have a parent who is unemployed. These young people are not responsible for the adult world in which they live, but often have to live with the outcomes. And whilst these are by no means determinants of poor outcomes, many are risk factors. They need not be. It is vital, therefore, that we give these young people a voice and that we actively listen to what they are telling us.

## Summary of Findings

### 1. The needs of young people in the MPHS community.

The vision that young people in the MPHS community have the skills, resources, and support to make positive life choices is supported by assisting young people to participate in one or more of the following:

- after school or extra-curricular activities, either school- or community-based;
- technology;
- family activities; and
- are supported to consistently attend school.

These activities then need to focus on helping young people to develop:

- problem solving and decision-making skills;
- positive peer relationships;
- academic competence;
- positive relationships with caring adults;
- resilience; and
- appropriate social behaviours.

### 2. Understanding how to respond to the needs

Understanding how the adult world may best respond to the needs of young people is essentially a puzzle in four parts. The first part of the puzzle is understanding the practical ways in which community supports such as MPHS, schools, parents, and peers can facilitate positive development through the provision of activities and events.

Community-based organisations and activities have been shown to have a significant impact on the skills, attitudes, and experiences of young people. Evidence from this research suggests that activities which involve sport, computers, music, gaming, cooking, and art are key to meaningfully engaging with the

young people in the MPHS community, particularly if there are opportunities for friends and family to be involved.

Given that parents appear to have significant influence over the activities of their 9-13 year olds, it is important that we pay attention to balancing the needs and interests of the young people against responsibilities and obligations which are important to their parents e.g. church, homework, sports training, and caring for siblings. The second part to the puzzle therefore involves understanding how activities can best engage young people, whilst at the same time responding to these responsibilities and obligations. Further, it also entails that information is provided to parents that outlines the benefits to their children of participating in community-based activities and how this participation can aid their social, emotional, and academic development.

The third piece of the puzzle is understanding how the community can work with young people in ways that recognise and assist their growing sense of agency and independence and that show young people that they too can help frame the world in which they live. Young people in this project told us that they are more likely to engage if things are fun, if they are given responsibility, if they are treated with kindness and respect and their unique abilities are recognised.

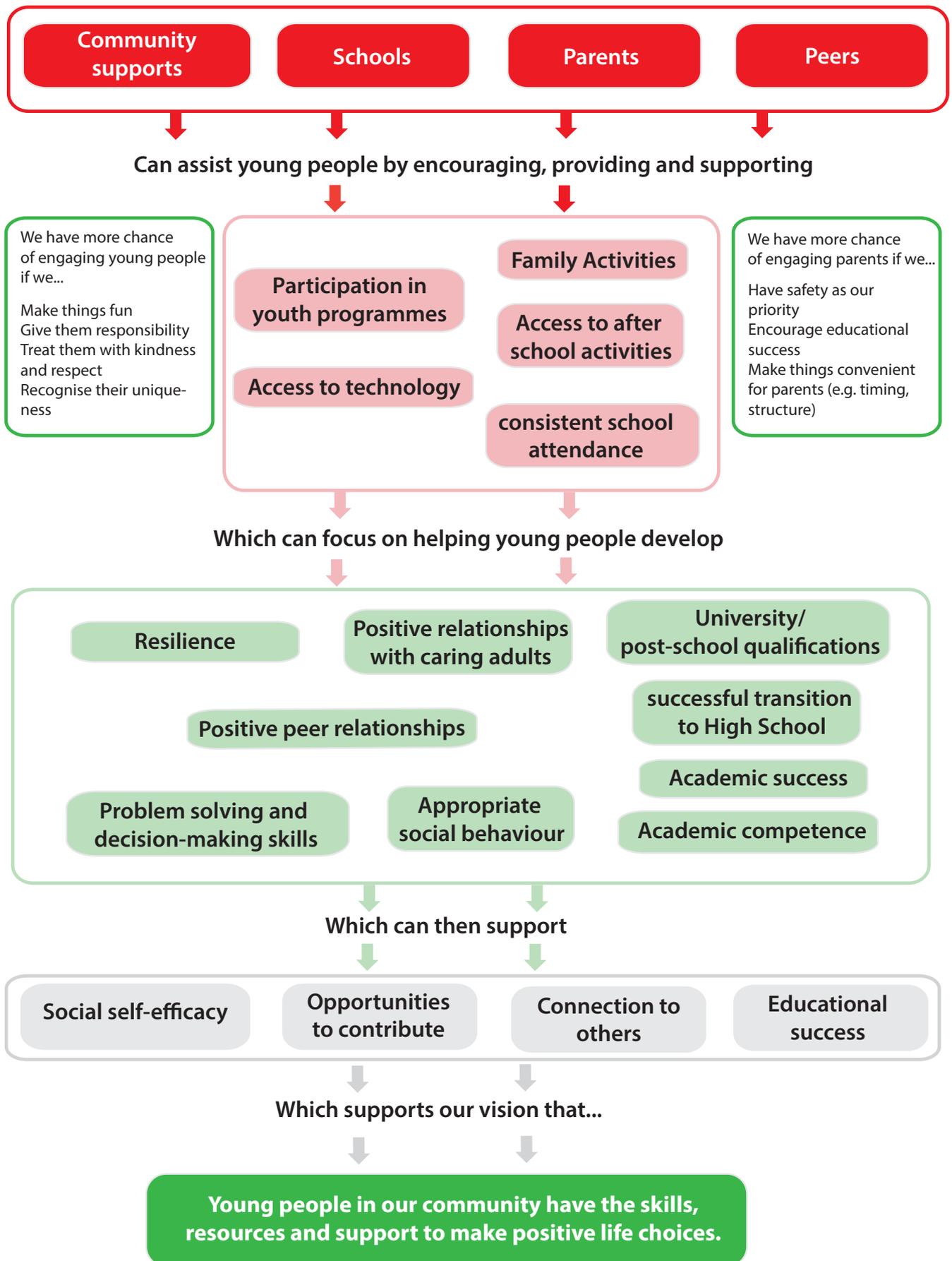
Our fourth piece of the puzzle brings all these elements together in a theory of change (Figure 1). Essentially, our theory of change shows how responding to the practical needs of 9-13 year olds e.g. through the provision of activities, can help young people develop resilience, positive relationships, appropriate social behaviours, and academic competence, which then support social self-efficacy, contribution, connection, and educational success. Our vision, that young people in the MPHS community have the skills, resources and support to make positive life choices, is dependent on the development of these factors.

### 3. Gaps

The completion of the Hub West community facility in 2012 and subsequent establishment of Studio MPHS, a high tech youth studio, has gone some way towards meeting the needs of some 9 - 13 year olds in the MPHS community. There are, however, barriers which may impede actions designed to address these gaps, such as time, cost and parental availability. Nonetheless, gaps still exist, primarily:

- activities which are focussed on skill-acquisition,

# Figure 1: Theory of Change



- e.g. cooking, musical instruments;
- sports activities which require specialised equipment e.g. swimming, gymnastics;
- community-based family activities e.g. those in which the whole family can participate;
- assistance for parents in understanding how to best support their 9 - 13 year olds in the transition from pre-teen to adolescence, particularly school-based transition (e.g. primary to intermediate school, intermediate school to college);
- an even ratio of male and female staff and volunteers; and
- information for parents to help them understand how taking part in community-based activities can impact positively on their children's social and academic competence.

## Summary of Recommendations

This collaborative enquiry has provided us with a number of insights into the activities and approaches for young people aged 9-13 in the McLaren Park, Henderson South communities and has generated a number of recommendations for practice. The recommendations are based around responding to the needs of young people, responding to the needs of parents, meaningfully engaging young people in activities and future practice considerations.

### 1. Meeting the needs of 9-13 year olds in the MPHS community

This research recommends that the positive development of young people aged 9 - 13 in the MPHS community is facilitated through the provision of activities which involve:

- opportunities to participate in sports-based activities, with a focus on teamwork and skill development. Martial arts activities are especially recommended;
- access to supervised computers and technology which can be used for learning and creative projects;
- opportunities to build and learn new skills, such as a new language, a musical instrument, cooking or photography;
- the development of artistic and performance skills, and opportunities to showcase these skills

to the wider community; and

- the provision of community-based family activities, particularly activities which have a "grown-ups versus kids" element to them.

It is noted here that MPHS already meets many of these needs e.g. through the provision of the High Tech Youth Studio which supports both technological and artistic skill development and sporting activities such as martial arts.

### 2. Engaging young people and their parents

This research recommends that, in order to fully engage young people and their parents, the responsibilities and obligations of 9-13 year olds in the MPHS community are recognised by:

- activity providers putting aside time before an activity to complete homework, or ensure that the activity leaves enough time for the child to complete homework afterwards;
- providing parents with written information on the activity e.g. what's involved, the duration of the activity (per session and per term), and the commitment required; and
- communicating with parents about the educational benefits to their child of participating in the activity.

Responding to the needs of parents also involves ensuring that safety is a priority, and includes:

- communicating with parents when their children arrive at an activity;
- communicating with parents when children leave an activity unsupervised (e.g. when they are walking home);
- having both female and male staff and volunteers available at all times;
- ensuring that all staff are police checked, and that this policy is clear to parents;
- paying attention to the balance of gender and ages of young people attending the activity;
- providing information for parents on the adult staff and volunteers involved in the activity, including their photos and information about their background and experience; and
- providing parents with contact details for the activity or programme, particularly for parents

who wish to contact adult staff prior to, during or just after a programme session.

### 3. Facilitating positive youth development

This research recommends that providers meet the developmental needs of 9-13 year olds by:

- focusing on the development of problem solving skills, goal setting, positive relationships, and positive learning experiences;
- ensuring that relationships with the young people are based on respectful interactions. 'Respect' for these young people means being treated "like an adult" and being talked to gently and kindly;
- working on a 'no surprises' basis and consulting with the young people around activities and plans;
- encouraging the formation of resilience through offering young people a safe space to be and encouraging positive interactions and connections with peers and caring adults;
- working with young people to help them articulate and realise their dreams and aspirations;
- modelling appropriate social behaviours, including offering firm guidance and consistent boundaries and holding them accountable for their behaviour;
- recognising that an approach that works for girls may not work for boys, and vice versa; and
- offering young people opportunities to contribute to their community in meaningful

ways.

### 4. Future practice considerations

This research recommends that:

- relationships continue to be built between local schools and community groups, to ensure that children who may benefit from participation in these programmes are encouraged to access them;
- parents in the MPHS community are able to access tools and information to better understand how to support their children's education, including the transition from pre-teen through to adolescence;
- MPHS works alongside other community activity providers for 9-13 year olds (e.g. sports clubs) to build their capacity around understanding the best practice approaches when working with young people, and how these approaches contribute to positive youth development; and
- MPHS and schools continue to build on the knowledge and activities that started with this action enquiry to ensure that what is provided for 9-13 year olds continues to be responsive to the needs of this age group.

### Language used in this report

For the purposes of brevity, this report refers to the children and young people aged 9-13 who were involved in this research as "young people".

Due to the dearth of literature specifically focussed



The sign says no tipping

(Photovoice)

on the needs and interests of children and young people in the 9-13 year-old age group, the literature review in this report contains information pertaining to youth up to 18 years, as well as specific sections focussed on 9-13 year olds. We have made every effort in the literature review to make this distinction clear.

## Limitations of this report

This report uses data from the 2006 census, which may be outdated. We plan to update the data section in this report when 2013 census data becomes available (after December 2013).

## Acknowledgements

First up, we would like to thank our incredible research team – the 70 amazing students from Bruce McLaren Intermediate and Henderson South Primary school who approached every part of this project with gusto, who accepted us into their schools and classrooms and who allowed us a glimpse of what it is like to be a young person in the MPHS community. You lot are the fun-est researchers in the world.

Thank you to Mr Emmet, Mr Wileman, Mr Diamond, and Mr Lilley who allowed us in to their classrooms and trusted that we knew what we were doing.

Thank you to the reference group, who gave freely of their time to assist us with our research objectives and understanding. Thanks also to the Henderson Men's Shed who constructed our exhibition stands.

Lastly, our thanks and appreciation to the whānau and families who gave up their time to talk with us, who contributed to the community dinner, who attended the photo exhibition, and who continue to engage with MPHS and the research team.

## Disclaimer

All findings and conclusions are those of the authors and are not to be attributed to the Lotteries Community Sector Research Fund.



Everybody can stand out in the crowd, you just need to know how

(Photovoice)

# Introduction

On paper, the suburbs of McLaren Park and Henderson South are highly deprived, low socioeconomic areas. Compared to children across the whole of Auckland, children in these suburbs are 50 per cent more likely to be parented by a single parent, are more likely to come from a low income household, are more likely to be stood down from school, and, when they leave school, are more likely to leave without a formal qualification.

What statistics aren't able to communicate, however, is the amount of work which is currently being undertaken in these suburbs to engender a sense of community pride and belonging. A new community facility, Hub West, has just opened, which features a community hall, commercial kitchen, conference and meeting spaces and a High Tech Youth Studio. Schools in the area are doing much work to engage their whānau and families, and local agencies are joining together to ensure there is support for local action. Community gardens, environmental projects, a 'men's shed' workshop, and community development projects are currently underway; most of which are driven by the McLaren Park and Henderson South Community Initiative (MPHS).

MPHS is a community-based and governed organisation based at Hub West. MPHS runs diverse projects and programmes including education, environmental restoration, youth empowerment, food rescue, community fitness, and neighbourhood development designed to help residents and community reach their full potential. A community enterprise, MPHS is governed by four community

members and staffed by 14 full- and part-time staff.

In 2008 MPHS started fundraising for the Hub West community facility, which was completed in 2012.

## Background to the project

This research was initiated by MPHS, in collaboration with key community stakeholders and young people, in order to understand how best to facilitate better outcomes for young people transitioning from pre-teen through to adolescence. It was inspired, in part, by a feasibility study commissioned by MPHS in 2008, which found that young people in the area wanted a safe space to go. The report also recommended that the needs of young people in McLaren Park and Henderson South be given greater attention to ensure that initiatives activities that are developed are responsive to the needs of young people.

In 2011, youth leaders began to report their growing concerns about a slightly younger crowd who were engaging in high-risk-taking behaviour which current MPHS staff were unsure how best to respond. In

addition, there were many more younger youth (i.e. 9-13 years old) who wanted to take part in MPHS programmes primarily designed for older youth. At the same time there was increased community concern for young people in the community who were noticeably struggling to cope with the transition from childhood into adolescence.

Based on their experience of using community feedback to implement community initiatives, MPHS proposed partnering with young people aged 9-13 from the local community in a research process designed to understand the practice approaches that were more likely to result in positive outcomes for 9-13 year olds in the MPHS community.

After receiving funding from the New Zealand Lotteries Commission, MPHS hired a part-time community researcher and partnered with independent research company, Point Research Ltd. In March 2012 the 'Amplify Action Enquiry' was launched.

## Purpose of the Research

The Amplify Action inquiry is aimed at working with young people aged 9-13 to create innovative and effective neighbourhood communities.

The three main questions this collaborative action enquiry sought to address were:

1. What best practice and/or new practice approaches are likely to result in positive outcomes for young people transitioning from pre-teen through to adolescence?
2. How can MPHS provide meaningful engagement to improve local young people's connectedness and wellbeing, particularly for those with the greatest need not currently catered for by government programmes for working families?
3. How can the MPHS community work together to ensure new initiatives are effective, innovative, collaborative and sustainable, whilst building the community's capacity to consider the new emerging evidence from this project?

The collaborative enquiry involved researchers from MPHS and Point Research, students and teachers from local primary and intermediate schools, and the families and whānau of young people. The research was overseen by a community reference group.

## Structure of the Report

This document comprises four sections.

Section One (Literature Review) is a review of the literature that explores the strategies and interventions that are most effective in working with children and young people. This section considers: adolescence, puberty, and brain development and the links between these; programme approaches and activities for adolescents, with a specific focus on approaches and activities for young people aged 9-13; what it means to work within a New Zealand context; and the linkages between community development and youth development, and how they can support each other.

In Section Two (Research Approach), we discuss the research process and approach in-depth. We review the evidence behind working with young people (aged 9-13), and illustrate how the research process is based on this evidence. We have done this in order to share our approach with others who may be interested in undertaking similar research.

Section Three (Research Findings) discusses the findings of the research, that is, how we may best respond to the needs of young people, how we best respond to the needs of parents, and how we meaningfully engage with young people.

Section Four (Recommendations) contains the recommendations from the research process, which are structured around the research approach and findings.



Speak Out "Fun Graph"



SpeakOut Graffiti Wall "Dreams"

## Participants

A number of groups and individuals were consulted during the course of this research:

1. Approximately 70 young people aged 9-13 from the Henderson South/Bruce McLaren community.
2. School teachers and principals from two local schools (one primary, one intermediate).
3. Whānau and families of children aged 9-13 in the Henderson South/Bruce McLaren community.
4. Staff of MPHS
5. Key neighbourhood stakeholders, including local police and youth workers

Note that the local high school declined an invitation to participate in this research.

## Gender and Ethnicity

Both genders were fairly equally represented, with approximately 31 girls and 29 boys taking part in the project at various times.

The ethnic groups taking part in the project could be roughly broken down as Pasifika (65%), Pakeha/NZ European (15%), Maori (10%) and Asian/Indian (10%).

These figures correspond to overall ethnicity data from the two schools enrolled in the project, where Pasifika students make up 55 per cent of the student population, Maori 27 per cent, European 10 per cent, and Asian seven per cent.

## Introducing the research team

The research team comprised Jonathan Hickman from MPHS, Nadine Metzger from Point Research, and 70 9-13 year olds from the Henderson South/Bruce McLaren community.

### Room 6, Bruce McLaren Intermediate

Room 6 provided this research project with a unique snapshot of what life is like for a class of boys who face social and academic challenges. They contributed every week with enthusiasm and commitment and were able to help us see all the special places in their community.

### Room 3, Bruce McLaren Intermediate

Room 3, a class full of "talent, creativity and wit", is the Year 8 Independent Workers Class at Bruce McLaren Intermediate. Girls are over-represented in the class, with a ratio of nearly 4:1 girls to boys. Seven nationalities are represented in the class.

### Research group, Henderson South School

Henderson South School aims to foster attitudes and skills for individuals to live positive lives in a changing world while achieving to the best of their ability. The promotion of community interaction, and individual and cultural difference is our ultimate goal. Fourteen Year 6 students chosen from rooms 1 and 2 participated in the research group.

## Methods

This project was a collaborative action enquiry, whereby the MPHS/Point Research team partnered with local schools, and relevant findings were implemented immediately into practice. During this process, the action enquiry itself became a form of community intervention. More details about this can be found in the Approach section, on page 17.

Multiple methods were used to ensure a robust triangulation of data. The methods were inclusive, participatory, strengths-based and focussed on the principles of positive youth development.

Methods used in this research were:

- literature review;
- statistical data capture;
- one-on-one key informant interviews;
- whānau interviews
- focus groups (including a community dinner which was also a data-gathering exercise);
- photovoice; and
- SpeakOut workshops.

## Literature Review

This review examined published and non-published primary and secondary research from New Zealand and other English speaking countries related to the strategies and interventions that are effective in working with children and young people.

Publications reviewed included journals and periodicals, books, reports by major research institutions or governments, conference proceedings and 'grey literature' documents (such as academic theses and other unpublished reports) relating to interventions, activities, and practice principles that are most effective when working with children and young people.

Searches of subject databases via the Massey University Library online catalogue included PsycINFO, Academic Search premier, ERIC, and JSTOR. In addition, the Google Scholar and Google databases were used to source articles. Articles were also sourced through bibliographies of relevant publications.

In order to capture all relevant studies, the search terms remained broad. The search terms were one of 'children', 'child', 'youth', 'pre teen', 'tamariki', 'rangatahi', 'early adolescent', 'early adolescence', 'young people', or 'teen' plus 'programme' or 'program' plus one or more of 'activity', 'approaches', 'programmes', 'community', 'development', 'evaluation'.

Using the above criteria and search methods, the search yielded 89 sources.

## Data collection

### Photovoice

Photovoice involves people taking photos about things that are important to them. These may then be presented to decision-makers and others who may wish to know more about the realities in which they live.



**It's cool because of the colour and pink is a nice colour.**

*(Photovoice)*

For this project, the researchers adapted a traditional photovoice format and carried out a 10-week photovoice exercise with the research team.

### SpeakOut

A SpeakOut is an interactive community consultation designed to engage communities in community planning processes. It is particularly effective with those who are rarely accommodated in more mainstream processes (such as children and adolescents), and works equally as well for both children and adults alike (Sarkissian et al., 2009).

The SpeakOut for this project involved a series of interactive activities (in a school classroom and hall), including a fun graph, a cafe table, a graffiti wall, a mapping exercise (cool spaces and dumb spaces), and a travel graph.

### Key informant interviews

Key informant interviews provide an opportunity to conduct in-depth individual conversations in a semi-structured manner and within a secure environment. Key informants are usually people who are well informed as well as being grounded within the project context. In this instance, key informants

were school principals, community workers,+ and local police.

### Intergenerational whānau interviews

Ten family and whānau of our young researchers took part in whānau interviews in both an individual and group capacity. The interviews were “intergenerational”, that is, they were conducted with both the family and the young people (and often other siblings) present.

### Whānau dinner

A whānau dinner, which was attended by approximately 35 whānau and family members, was held at the end of the research process to feedback the research findings around what the young people wanted, and to identify possibilities for parental involvement.

### Focus Group

A focus group was held with 11 female students from the year 8 class, in order to gain a better understanding of their motivations for joining in or participating in activities.

### “What my parents want for me”

(whānau dinner)

Don't be dum  
have a good  
education

My parents hopes &  
dreams for me  
are 2:  
grow up & be  
successful but  
@ the same time  
share with the  
world & make  
a Difference.

Take care of  
my family and  
friend including  
them.

① to be Successful  
② try hard at all  
subject:

To have an  
good education, and  
job.

To make it to  
university!



**Look out behind you, there might be a train coming**

*(Photovoice)*

# Literature Review

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What is the evidence behind best-practice approaches when working with young people aged 9-13? How can we respond to their needs in ways which are developmentally appropriate, and which give proper consideration to the things they think are important?

This literature review explores the strategies and interventions that are most effective in working with children and young people.

It should be noted that there is a dearth of literature specifically focussed on the needs and interests of children and young people in the 9 - 13 year old age group. This review therefore contains information pertaining to youth up to 18 years, as well as specific sections focussed on 9 - 13 year olds. This has been done as it is our contention that positive youth development principals applied to working with older youth also apply when working with those in the 9 - 13 year age group.

The review is structured into four areas. The first examines adolescence, puberty and brain development and the links between these. Section two considers programme approaches and activities for adolescents, with a specific focus on approaches and activities for young people aged 9-13. The review examines what it means to work within a New Zealand context, particularly with regards to working within frameworks pertinent to tamariki and rangatahi Māori (Māori children and teens) and working within Pasifika frameworks for young Pacific peoples.

The final section looks at the linkages between community development and youth development, and how they can support each other.

## Adolescence, Puberty and Brain Development

Adolescence is a universal developmental stage of transition from childhood to adulthood. There are several different definitions of adolescence and the age ranges it comprises. Pre-adolescence is generally defined as the period from 9 – 13 years old, although it can range from 10-12 for girls and 11 to 13 for boys (Sadeh, Gruber & Raviv 2006). Perspectives on the age range of adolescence vary, with many placing the start of adolescence at the beginning of puberty (sexual maturation), which for some children can begin as young as 7 or 8. For the purposes of this review, we have chosen to follow Gluckman and colleagues (2011) lead and define adolescence as “the period between the onset of puberty and the time when an individual is accepted as an adult by the society in which he or she lives” (p.23).

With few exceptions, adolescents in every society go

through the adolescent transition from childhood to adulthood. Steinberg (2011) has divided this major developmental period into three fundamental changes. First are the biological physical changes of puberty. The second changes are cognitive and are centred on how the young person processes their thoughts in a more orderly way. The third fundamental change is social, and involves the way that society begins to define young people.

Developing identity and seeking independence from the adults who have up until this time provided regulatory structure and guidance during their childhood (Berk, 2008), may mean that adolescence can be an emotional time in the young person's life. Adolescence is the backbone for the development of young people's personality and identity and as such can be a period of adjustment and increased vulnerability. Pre-adolescence is a particularly important time for the development of resilience. Pre-adolescents that experience accomplishing a task, discovering a talent, or an academic achievement, will be more likely to foster and carry confidence into their future (Steinberg, 2011).

The earlier onset of puberty for both boys and girls which has occurred within the last two generations (Gluckman et al. 2011) may have considerable effects on the identity development of the adolescent. Gluckman and colleagues assert that the actual and perceived maturity of youngsters who have entered puberty may lead to issues with identification and expectations:

“The perception that an individual looks mature and is advanced in puberty can lead to inappropriate assumptions about other aspects of their maturity and behaviour. This presumption can occur both in how others perceive the child and how the child perceives himself or herself.”

(Gluckman et al. 2011, p.23)

Adolescence is also a time of experimentation. During this stage, young people make decisions which may positively or negatively impact and affect their health and well-being, both immediately and lifelong. Evidence suggests that increases in sensation seeking, risk taking and reckless behaviour in adolescence are influenced by pubertal development and not by chronological age (Steinberg, 2011, Martin et al., 2002). Brain development during adolescence means there is limited plasticity, and intellectual functioning is also in a state of transition and instability (Steinberg, 2005). The thought processes of adolescents to project themselves and others into the future is limited, and the consequences of their actions are not often factored into their decision making process (ibid). As a result, adolescents are more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviour and are particularly vulnerable to injury during this time (Kelly, Schochet & Landry, 2004). Pubertal maturity is a key factor in risk-taking behaviour. Strong relationships with parents and other adults can also decrease the likelihood of risk-taking behaviour, particularly for young males. According to Luszczynska & Schwarzer (2005):



**Graffiti aint bad, it's what you write and where you write it that makes it bad.**

(Photovoice)

“ Parents also play an integral role in fostering self-efficacy in their children and they may need to get more involved, especially with their male teens. This is particularly important for at-risk teens because increased self-efficacy is associated with a decrease in risk-taking behaviours among adolescents .”

(cited in Moore et al., 2007, p. 142)

The formation and development of a positive identity during adolescence is important to ensuring a smooth transition between adolescence and adulthood (Tsang and Yip, 2006). The development of positive identity is linked to positive associations with gender and culture as well as the urban environment and community in which a young person lives. Research conducted with a group of youth in South Auckland shows that the development of identity in young people is closely linked to their urban environment. In this research, Borell (2005) examined the experiences of young urban Māori and the development of a distinctive 'Southside' identity in South Auckland. She found that urban Māori youth in South Auckland had many positive, strong and meaningful associations to their 'Southside' urban environment, despite the negative public representation of South Auckland and opinions that urban Maori youth are disconnected to their tribal heritage, land and community.

Culture and cultural identity is another central tenet of positive identity development in adolescence. In 2010, Mila-Sharaaf and Robinson examined the Pacific findings from New Zealand's first secondary school student health and wellbeing Youth2000 survey to determine if there is a relationship between culture and educational outcomes amongst second generation or New Zealand-born Pacific migrants in New Zealand. The study showed the importance of pride in Pacific cultural identities, Pacific cultural values, feeling accepted by your own Pacific ethnic group as well as by others and the advantages associated with continuing to speak Pacific languages. The findings were significantly associated with advantageous education outcomes.

### Early adolescence: 9 – 13 year olds

Whilst it is important to understand the general changes and challenges of general adolescence as defined above, it should also be recognised that 9 – 13 year olds have their own set of unique needs and considerations. Early adolescence is a period marked by rapid changes in children's physical, cognitive,



**One day you will realise that you're right on top, proud and not ashamed**

(Photovoice)

social and emotional development (Eccles, 1999), which include refining and developing their fine and gross motor skills, learning persistence and developing physical competence and self-confidence and autonomy (Rathus, 2006). Indeed, the development of autonomy is considered one of the most important tasks of early adolescence (Russell and Bakken, 2002). More than independence, autonomy is a sense of self-governance, responsibility and decision-making, which is being able to think, feel and make moral decisions that belong to the individual, rather than following what others do or believe (Steinberg 1999).

Cognitively, 9 to 12 year olds begin to think in more abstract terms, have a more complex understanding of cause and effect and have an improved capacity to solve logic-based problems (Allen and Morotz 2010). Peer relationships become increasingly important, particularly to social and emotional development, and poor relationships in early adolescence are a significant predictor of adverse outcomes in later adolescence and early adulthood (Richardson and Prior, 2005).

Resilience-building activities for early adolescents can establish a foundation for safe play and exploration and have the potential to lower risk-taking behaviours in later adolescence and early adulthood (Australian and New Zealand Child Death Review and Prevention Group 2012). Participation in youth programmes and activities which offer 9 to 12 year olds a safe place to learn and play may help to build resilience and autonomy. Resilience can be encouraged through the establishment of places where children and young people feel safe and can develop positive ways of interacting with each other as well as caring adults. Stanton-Salazar & Spina (2005) noted that friendship and social networks also work to enhance resilience by acting as primary tools in help-seeking and enhance the development of emotional intelligence (cited in Bottrell, 2009). Further, Evans and Plumridge (2007) believe the following resilience factors can be built in to programmes for children and young people:

- Developing problem-solving skills
- Setting goals and overcoming challenges
- Fostering positive peer relationships
- Supporting and fostering caring family

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**Young people want activities which offer flexibility, less structure, and more leisure with small groups of good friends who share a specific interest**

relationships

- Engaging young people in positive learning experiences
- Offering opportunities to engage socially

Autonomy may be encouraged by programmes which offer:

- Firm guidance and consistent boundaries;
- Giving young people increased responsibility for decision-making around out-of-school activities;
- Giving young people a voice in community decision-making;
- Listening to and encouraging opinions;
- Participation in community events and activities;
- Purposefully and genuinely engage them in decision-making and empowerment opportunities,
- Holding young people accountable for their behaviour, and;
- Supporting them and acknowledging their efforts (Russell and Bakken, 2002)

## Youth programme approaches & activities

Youth programmes offer young people opportunities to participate in recreational, education and social activities (Smith 2001). The format, location and duration of youth programmes vary, however most engage young people in challenging but fun things to do, and provide ways to spend their free time that contribute positively to their learning and social development through a variety of social, educational, cultural, employment and identity-related services (Fouche, et al. 2010).

Well-designed youth programmes can have a significant positive effect on the lives of young people, giving them the opportunity to engage in positive activities, develop positive relationships and to enhance their self-efficacy and self-esteem (McLaughlin, 2000). Overseas studies have found that participation in good quality programmes produces a range of short- and long-term positive effects. These include: an increase in self-confidence and self-esteem, lowered rates of criminal and anti-social behaviour and aggression, lowered rates of alcohol and other drug use, lowered rates of teen pregnancy, and reduced levels of negative emotions such as depression and anxiety (Hirsch, 2007; Mahoney et al., 2004). Moreover, these positive effects are not restricted to the young person and

can also be seen in their whānau and communities (Fouche et al., 2010).

Youth programmes play a particularly important role for younger teens. Eccles (1999) claims that although younger teens want a certain amount of distance from their parents, they often want to fill this space with close relationships with other adults. She says:

“ They want to share their ideas with adults and to benefit from adult wisdom. It is likely that adolescents turn disproportionately to their peers for guidance through the “separation” process only when they do not have opportunities to bond with non-familial adults. Out-of-school programs are ideal settings for such interactions and relationships to flourish.”

(p.39)

A decade-long study of more than 120 community-based youth organisations in the United States shows that community-based youth organisations can have a significant impact on the skills, attitudes, and experiences of young people and make a positive difference to their lives (McLaughlin, 2000). Surveys of participants in this study show that 26 per cent were more likely to be recognised for academic achievement than American youth generally and were 20 per cent more likely to indicate they would participate in higher education. In addition, when compared to “typical American youth”, the young people in the study were significantly more likely to

indicate higher levels of self-efficacy and self-esteem. McLaughlin notes:

“ Youth who participated in these community-based organizations ... express a sense of personal value, hopefulness, and agency far greater than peers in their community, and greater even than youth growing up in more representative American circumstances. These youth generally feel proud of what they can do and believe they can construct a positive life.”

(p.5)

Researchers believe that participation in youth programmes can enhance engagement in school and the wider community (Seligson & MacPhee, 2004). This is primarily because the emphasis on activities, rather than academic abilities, helps to create a space in which young people can experience and demonstrate different skills (ibid.) Developing these competencies can complement classroom experience by helping young people develop confidence in learning. This can then lead to them becoming more active learners and viewing learning as a partnership, rather than something which is imposed upon them (Wikeley et al, 2007; Hirsch, 2007).

Youth programmes and community-based youth work play an important role in the formation of positive identity for young people; indeed, the literature on youth engagement has a reoccurring



**Starting from something small can lead to something big!!!**

(Photovoice)

theme where youth have identified citizenship and a sense of belonging as an important aspect to their identity (Devine, 2002). Their experiences of connectedness, interdependence as a valued member of their family and community impacts on their participation in community based services and their formation of a positive identity.

## Approaches & Activities for Young People aged 9-13

Exactly what the participation of 9-13 year olds in youth programmes and activities entails is an area which is relatively neglected in both New Zealand-based and international literature (Brown, 2006). Richardson and Prior (2006) believe that one of the reasons for this is that whilst programmes for this age group do exist, they are poorly reported and often have little or no evaluation running alongside to measure impact and outcomes.

### Specific activities

1. Research conducted in the US with 57 young people and their parents suggests that, overall, young teens and their parents want activities which offer flexibility, less structure, and more leisure with small groups of good friends who share a specific interest (Marczak, Dworkin, Skuza, & Beyer, 2006). Brown (2006) found that the best examples of programming for young people aged 9 – 13 were in purpose-built premises. Specific resources and activities requested by the young people involved in this research were pool tables, computer games, musical equipment, quality art and craft materials and lots of varied games.

The literature shows that other successful activities for young people include (but are not limited to):

- **Structured drop in.** This is a combination of programmed activities and unstructured 'hanging out'. Activities could include playing pool, cooking food, listening to or playing music, working on computers or taking part in sports activities such as basketball (Brown, 2006).
- **Sports-based programmes and activities,** which can be used to promote athletic skills and healthy lifestyles, but are also valuable to teamwork and decision-making skills (Perkins & Noam, 2007).
- **Arts and art therapy approaches.** Young people who have participated in drama and music arts programmes have increased levels of self-

esteem, better engagement with learning, and an enhanced ability to work cooperatively with others (Bryce et al., 2004). Community-based arts or cultural projects have been shown to increase youth self-esteem, social skills, and academic achievement as well as reinforce support networks, provide opportunities for community participation, extend community possibilities and improve the general well being of participants (Buys & Miller, 2009).

- **Food and nutrition-based activities.** These activities have been shown to improve practical cooking skills (Parrish, 2006) as well as positively impacting on the health and nutritional knowledge of participants (Liquori, Koch, Contento and Castle, 1998).
- **Open-space activities.** Outdoor programmes have been found to help younger teens with their transition to adolescence in constructive and supportive ways (Ungar, Dumond & McDonald 2005). Outdoor activity helps reduce childhood obesity and can reduce the symptoms of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (Gill 2008). Community gardens are a particularly effective activity which can lead to better community relationships, greater self-efficacy, development of life skills and attitudes.
- **Skills development (Technology).** A three year evaluation of the Computer clubhouse concept in South Auckland shows that teens who took part were more engaged in learning, attained higher NCEA levels and were more likely to go on to tertiary study than their peers (Computer Clubhouse Trust, 2009).
- **Youth transition services,** whereby a youth advisor accompanies younger or pre-teens on a teen programme (Brown, 2006)

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**One of the simplest ways to design programmes and activities which appeal to young people is to ask them what they want**

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**Respect your culture and your culture will respect you**

*(Photovoice)*

- **Future career-focussed activities.** Activities which focus on career-based skills or guidance can assist young people to discover and develop skills related to their wider wellbeing (e.g. confidence, cooperation, problem solving), rather than simply vocational or professional skills (Dalziel 2010). Encouraging young people to explore their potential capabilities can help unleash a range of possible future pathways and may encourage those who are disengaged from education and skills development to re-engage in order to realise their potential (ibid).

## Approaches

One of the simplest ways to design programmes and activities which appeal to young people is to ask them what they want. Allowing children and young people to lead decision making on activity choice goes some way towards ensuring that activities will be appealing to their skills and interests and will enable them to feel some control over their learning and learning outcomes (Seligson and MacPhee 2004; Marczak, et al. 2006; Saito, 2006). Overall, research shows that successful approaches are those which enable children and young people to feel as though they are in control of their learning and learning outcomes (Hirsch, 2007), are flexible and responsive to changing developmental needs (Seligson and MacPhee 2004), create multiple opportunities for meaningful participation (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995), have plenty of opportunities for socialising (Marczak, Dworkin, Skuza, & Beyer, 2006), provide opportunities for parents, siblings and the wider social networks to

take part and share successes (Evans and Plumridge 2007) and allow young people to develop positive relationships with supportive adults, including programme coordinators, but also adults from within the wider community who share common interests (Hirsch, 2007; Marczak, et al. 2006).

Understanding what is important to children and young people is also important to designing successful programmes and activities. In 2007, the New South Wales Commission for Children and Young People asked 126 children and young people aged 8-15 what well-being looked like for them. Themes which emerged that are particularly pertinent to organisations which deliver activities for children are:

- Agency: to be consulted and involved in decisions which affect their lives.
- Safety and security: to feel safe exploring their neighbourhoods and outside school activities with increasing independence and autonomy; fair boundaries and limits.
- Skills to interact with and learn about their local communities and its residents in respectful and respect-earning ways.
- Challenge, but with opportunities for success.
- Rich language environments.
- An outlet for physical energy with sufficient rest breaks.
- Accessible contact with nature (both flora and fauna), and experiences which help them explore

the natural world with respect and appreciation.

- Opportunities to make and develop peer friendships.
- Downtime and time to reflect and process events and emotions
- Strong, positive relationships with parents and other adults in their communities
- Leaders, mentors and role models who are skilled in providing challenge, encouragement, honest productive feedback, and the skills and strategies of resilience (Wollongong, Shellharbour and Shoalhaven councils, 2011, p.12).

McLaughlin (2005) shows that the most successful community-based youth programmes are those which are intentionally youth-centred, that is: they respond to diverse talents, skills and interests; build on strengths; tailor their activities to the interests and strengths of the youth with whom they work; feature youth leadership and voice and build relationships among youth, their community and society. Moreover, the study found that the most successful programmes were those which constantly engaged in cycles of planning, practice and performance and which contained multiple opportunities for feedback and recognition.

## Barriers to participation

Providers of out-of-school or community programmes for children and young people aged 9-13 face many challenges and some barriers to participation. A lack of participation or disengagement can occur when young people perceive that their learning environment does not cater to their interests, potential or abilities (Dalziel 2010), when programmes are overly structured (Marczak, Dworkin, Skuza, & Beyer, 2006), or when they feel unwelcome or uncomfortable (Saito, 2006).

Brown (2006, cited in Wollongong, Shellharbour and Shoalhaven councils, 2011) found that the following are key barriers preventing children and young people from taking part in community-based out-of-school activities:

- Lack of information
- Inappropriate programming
- They do not find out-of-school programmes stimulating
- They are busy with other activities (e.g.

homework)

- Cost
- Lack of transport

Some groups of children experience more barriers than others. Children and young people born overseas in non-English speaking countries, from one-parent families and with unemployed parents are at least half as likely to participate in out-of-school activities than their peers (Coombs 2009, cited Wollongong, Shellharbour and Shoalhaven councils, 2011).

Specific barriers to participation cited by children and young people aged 9-13 include not wanting to participate in activities at which they may not excel through fear of peer criticism or exposing a lack of talent (Marczak, Dworkin, Skuza, & Beyer, 2006), or not wanting to take part because they find the activities boring or "babyish", there are not enough computers and they have homework to do. A lack of sports activities is particularly off-putting for boys; for girls it is a lack of dance and drama activities. Most importantly, they want to take part in activities which are based in their own neighbourhood (Brown 2006, cited in Wollongong, Shellharbour and Shoalhaven councils, 2011).

Concerns about the safety of the neighbourhood, urban detritus such as syringes and broken glass, bullying and anti-social behaviour from other adolescents are the most common concerns expressed by parents and carers and can all be barriers to participation in out-of school activities (Wood, 2009). Participation in programmes may, however, help to alleviate these risks. Research conducted in Scotland show that parents, particularly parents of younger teens, believe that supervised activities of the type offered by youth programmes reduce the likelihood of their children coming into contact with risks (Murphey 2000).

## Working within a New Zealand context

Approaches to positive youth development with Aotearoa/New Zealand should acknowledge relevant cultural frameworks, particularly those specific to Māori and Pasifika youth (Farrugia, et al., 2010; Fouche et al., 2010).

In terms of practical approaches, Perkins and Noam (2007) assert that young people themselves are best placed to illustrate their own cultural contexts and activities and programmes should be flexible enough to allow the inclusion of different rules and expectations which are respectful to the different

cultures of the young people involved. Moreover, programmes which work within relevant cultural frameworks deliberately foster cultural competence by providing an inclusive environment and allowing young people to continually expand their own cultural knowledge (ibid.).

## Working with tamariki and rangatahi Māori

Jansen and colleagues (2010) suggest that those working with youth take a holistic approach which focuses on the whole person, rather than addressing narrow aspects of the young person's strengths and skills. Two models, Te Whare Tapa Wha and Te Wheke are well suited to this approach, particularly when working with Māori youth.

The Whare Tapa Wha model, as developed by Mason Durie in 1994, covers the four cornerstones of Māori health and wellbeing: te taha tinana (physical health); te taha whānau (whānau or relational health); te taha hinengaro (mental/psychological health) and te taha wairua (spiritual health) (Jansen, et al., 2010). Te Whare Tapawha literally means "the house with four walls" and is often symbolised by a wharenuī (house) where each of the dimensions represent a cornerstone of the wharenuī in order to illustrate how their dependence on one another (Ministry of Health, 2011).

Te Wheke, developed by Rangimarie Rose Pere, presents the octopus (te wheke) as a symbol representing the whānau, hapū or iwi. The head of the octopus represents the whānau, the eyes as waiora (total wellbeing), and the eight tentacles represent a specific dimension of health. Love (2004) explains that the each of the eight tentacles

represents:

“

...a dimension of selfhood, and the numerous suckers on each tentacle represent the many aspects within each dimension. The tentacles of the octopus are overlapping and intertwined to symbolise the interconnected and inseparable nature of the dimensions. The dimensions of the octopus, represented by the tentacles as identified by Pere are: wairua [spirit], mana ake [uniqueness], mauri [life force], whānaungatanga [relationships], tīnana [body], hinengaro [mind/mental health], whatumanawa [emotions], hā ā koro mā ā kuia mā [breath of life from ancestors]. The model proposes that sustenance is required for each tentacle/dimension if the organism is to attain waiora or total well-being. Pere defines healthy Māori selfhood in terms of waiora or total well-being.”

(p.4)

Ware (2009) suggests that incorporating cultural constructs such as Whare Tapa Wha and Te Wheke into policy and practice has been successful in improving outcomes for Māori in education and health. Further, she recommends that a dedicated approach to Māori youth development should incorporate:

1. An affirmative approach to Māori youth;
2. Culturally derived constructs that are relevant to Māori youth;
3. Diversity and expression of Māori youth;



**Art is cool because it makes people have emotions**

(Photovoice)



**Sometimes life can feel like a storm, crowded - with no one there. In times like this I say to myself all I need to do is to wait for the storm to pass and wait for the sun to start shining again.**

*(Photovoice)*

4. Relevant youth development theory, and;
5. Relevant Māori development goals (p. 107)

In addition to incorporating cultural constructs relevant to Māori youth into programme structure and design, whānau and the relationship of tamariki and rangatahi Māori to their whānau should also be taken into account. Whānau structures have strengths and resiliency features which are “advantageous for adolescent development” (Cunningham 2011, p.145). In their study on youth development and Māori family culture, Edwards and colleagues note that Māori whānau are important for support and nurturing and are the “key sites for the intergenerational transfer of knowledge, wealth and power in Māori society (p.20).”

### Working with Pasifika young people

Family and culture are a key source of identity for Pasifika youth, to the extent that many Pasifika youth identify prosperity as being intrinsically tied to strong healthy families and relationships, rather than material acquisitions (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2003). As with rangatahi Māori, family groups are particularly important for Pasifika youth. These family groups are particularly important to the passing on of knowledge, which is articulated in terms of wider family and community (Suaalii and Mavoia 2001, cited in Loveridge, 2010). In their 2006 study of Samoan youth (aged 13-18) and their family

relationships in New Zealand, Fa'alau and Jensen found that most youth felt cared for by their families and reported a strong bond with them, particularly siblings. Whilst the youth felt a close bond with their parents most of the time, they also felt that their parents exerted a great deal of influence and control over their choice of friends, money, leisure time and schooling. Tunufa'i (2005, cited in Nakhid, 2009) also found that parent's desire to control their children's choices was a source of conflict and tension for many Samoans growing up in New Zealand.

One of the frameworks which informs and shapes approaches to working with Pasifika youth is the Fonua model, as developed by Sione Tu'itahi (2009). Whilst developed as a model of health promotion, the concept of Fonua may also be applied to understanding how to work with Pasifika peoples. Essentially, fonua refers to the interdependent relationships between people and the land. Whilst fonua is a Tongan word, the concept is present in many other Pacific cultures. Tu'itahi identifies the five levels of Fonua as the individual, family, village (or community), nation and global society. There are four phases, exploratory (kumi fonua), formative (langa fonua), maintenance (tauhi fonua) and reconstruction (tufunga fonua). The four values of the Fonua model are fe'ofa'ofani (love), fetokoni'aki (reciprocity), fefaka'apa'apa'aki (respect), and fakapotopoto (prudent, judicious, wise leadership & management). These may be applied to youth development by using an approach which recognises that individuals are enmeshed within their family structure (and therefore should not seek to separate the individual from their family), which seeks to consult through the four phases and which applies the values of love, reciprocity, respect and wise leadership.

A second model is that of the Fonofale, as developed by Fuimaono Karl Pulotu-Endemann. The Fonofale model is similar to Whare Tapa Wha, in that it uses the metaphor of a house or fale as a way to illustrate the interdependent nature of the different parts. The dimensions of the Fonofale model as articulated by Pulotu-Endemann (2001) are:

- The foundation or floor, which represents family, history and ancestry
- The roof, which represents the cultural values and beliefs which shelter the family
- The four pou, or posts, which connect the culture and family. The pou are spiritual, physical, mental and other (e.g. gender, sexuality, age, socio-economic status).

The Fonofale is wrapped in a cocoon of environment, time and context. As with the Fonua model, the Fonofale concept highlights the importance of working with Pasifika peoples within a holistic framework of family, culture and social context.

## Youth Development as Community Development

In healthy communities, youth development is synonymous with community development (McLaughlin, 2006). Community, schools, peers and parents/families/whānau are all significant factors in the positive development of children and young people (Winthrop 2009). Typically, however, there is a disjuncture between one or more of these factors. McLaughlin (2006, p.26) argues that “youth-based community development must engage all of the institutions through which youth move if a vital context for their growth is to be constructed.”

The interaction between community, schools, peers and family/whānau are a vital part of positive youth development. In Australia, the Pathways to Prevention Programme tested this philosophy with programme activities organised around the concept of an ecological developmental pathway which encompassed all the specific contexts in which the participants lived. The programme found that the effectiveness of interventions depended not only on the quality of these contexts (such as home or school) and the strength of the connections between such settings, but also on the extent to which activities in one setting reinforced, supported or amplified the benefits of activities in other settings (France et al., 2010).

These support efforts are co-ordinated as far as possible to form cohesive networks that promote young people’s well-being in all areas of their development (social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and spiritual). Development is understood as “a complex and multi-faceted process that is influenced by a range of contexts and systems (e.g. families, schools, neighbourhoods, ethnic and spiritual communities), and by the relations between them” (France et al., 2007, p. 1201)

Positive school-family-community connections which foster the development of children and young people have been shown to improve student achievement and influence key outcomes such as attendance and behaviour (Henderson and Mapp, 2002). Community-based organisations play a critical role in fostering these connections by

building on community assets and strengthening the features of community which contribute to the well-being of children, young people and their families. The contribution works both ways. Youth with high levels of participation in community activities are almost twice as likely to strongly agree that they feel positive about themselves and have more control over their lives (McLaughlin, 2006)



**This photo explains how sore my feet were after walking around a lot, my shoes were too big and they kept coming off.**

*(Photovoice)*

## Research Approach

One of the central aims of this project was to build the capacity of MPHS to undertake similar research in the future. In order to do this, a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project was undertaken, whereby MPHS, Point Research, and local schools collaborated throughout the research process.

In order to do this, MPHS contracted a part-time community researcher (Jonathan Hickman) who was responsible for creating and maintaining community relationships, responding to research findings as they arose, integrating what was learned into MPHS strategy and practice, and partnering with Point Research in all the research activities and ensuring that these fit with the community.

In total, more than 70 young people from two schools took part in the research between May 2012 and February 2013.

Early on in the research process, it became clear that the research itself was a form of community intervention with its own set of impacts and outcomes. Originally planned as a low-intervention community partnership, the research process grew into a relatively intensive school and community research partnership involving a number of different methods, such as photovoice, a 'speakout' workshop, focus groups, an exhibition, interviews and a whānau dinner. In addition to this, young people are currently engaged with the outputs of the research and will be involved in helping to disseminate the learnings from this project.

There were many differences between the three classes/groups of young people who took part in the research. The Year 8 students, for example, were an accelerated learners' class, who appeared to have access to more activities and opportunities outside of the classroom than the Year 7 students, a class of mostly boys, with some social and academic challenges. It was the Year 7 class, however, who enthusiastically embraced the idea of the research project and who responded positively to the idea of being trusted with cameras and camera equipment. The Year 8 class, who were less enthusiastic about taking photos for the photovoice part of the research process, showed great skill and insight during the analysis. The Year 6 research group from the primary school responded extremely well to being "hand picked" by their principal to take part in the project, and responded well to the extra responsibility they were given and eagerly and thoughtfully approached all parts of the project.

These three quite disparate groups required the research team to adjust its approach, session by session, week by week. Flexibility was key, as was responsiveness, active listening, relationship building, and actively showing and encouraging mutual respect. This research approach, modelled

on how the young people told us they wanted to be treated at the beginning of the research process, has therefore become part of the findings of the research; that is, in working with the young people we have been privileged to see first-hand how they respond to different practice approaches.

Informal feedback from parents and teachers during and after the research project indicated that many of the young people who took part in the project had learned new skills, and had grown in confidence and competence. On-going relationships have been built between the researchers and the young people, particularly between community researcher Jonathan (who is now employed part-time at the High Tech Youth Studio), and the year 7 and 8 students. As a result, the majority of new enrolments in the Studio to date have been from these students. Further, not only are these young people involved in the studio, some of their parents have also connected (or are in the process of connecting) with MPHS as helpers or volunteers.

It is important that we take note of the voices of our children and young people. For this reason, we have chosen to outline, in-depth, our chosen methods and research processes, so that others who wish to work alongside 9-13 year olds may be able to build on the learnings from our approach.

As already noted in the literature review, there is a dearth of published information on activities and approaches for 9-13 year olds outside of educational teacher/student settings. Further, whilst we could find a reasonable amount of information on the benefits of involving children and young people in research (and the ethical considerations of doing so), there was very little substantiation in the literature as to actual research processes and methods that

may be employed with primary and intermediate school-aged children and young people.

In this section, therefore, we outline our research methods and processes alongside the evidence supporting the participation of children and young people in research and evaluation. Given the partnership focus of the research approach, we pay particular attention in this section to the importance of youth participation, developmentally-appropriate ways to engage children and young people, ethical considerations and how involving young people in evaluative processes can contribute to positive youth development.

## The importance of youth participation in evaluation

Real and significant participation of children and young people in evaluation involves them taking an active part in all stages of decision-making on issues that affect them. In the last decade the participation of children and young people in decision-making processes in New Zealand has been partly driven by the 'consumer movement' and the influence of users in service provision, partly by the ratification of Article 12 of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) - which states that children have the right to freely express their opinions and to have that opinion considered in decisions that affect them - and partly by recent research which has shown that children are competent decision-makers and can play an active role in shaping their own environment (Sinclair 2004).

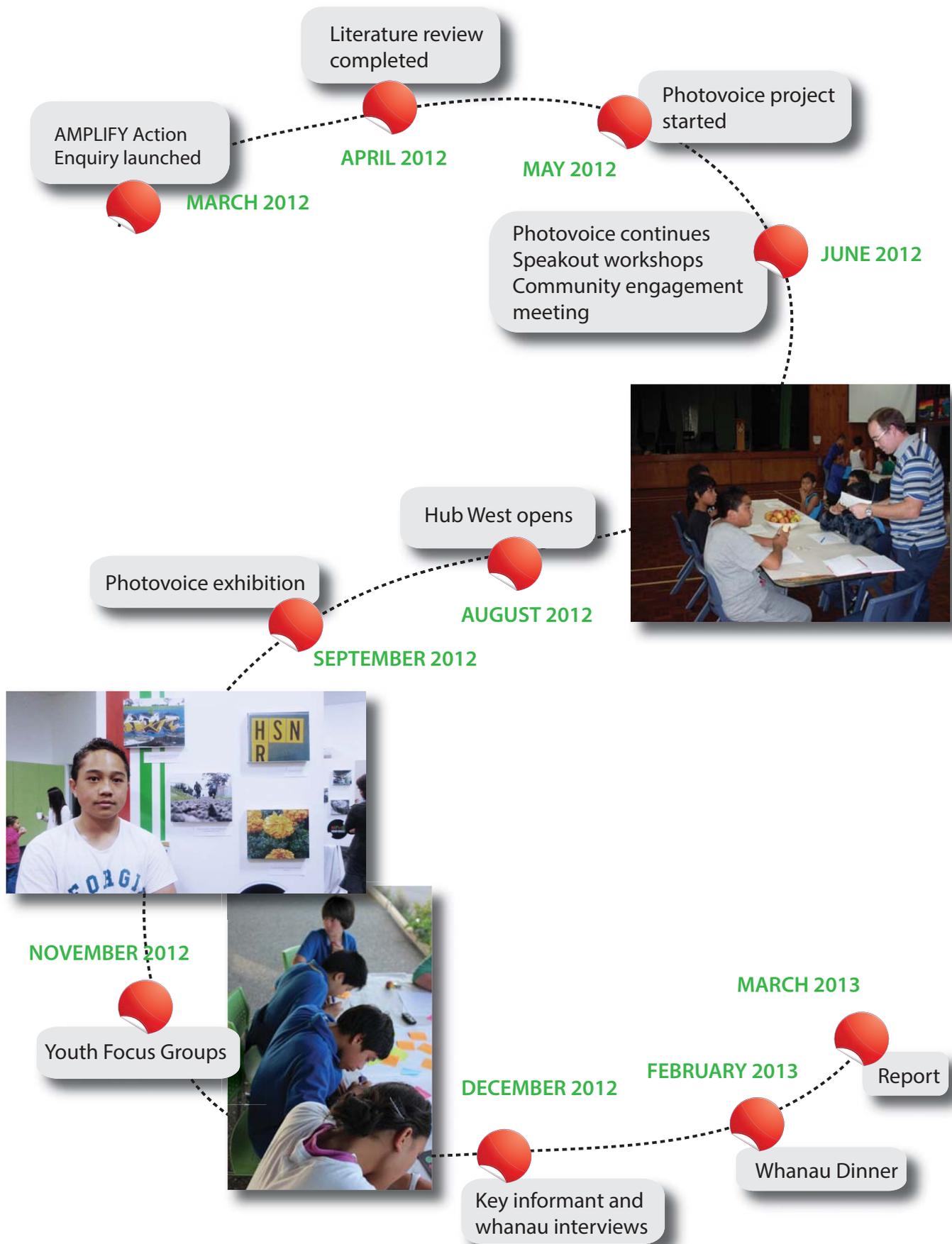
In their discussion of youth participation in community evaluation research, Checkoway and Richards-Shuster (2003) identify five reasons why youth participation is important. Firstly, as evaluation research can provide credible information for action-taking, youth participation is a legitimate avenue for youth to develop knowledge for social action. Secondly, youth participation in community evaluation research can enable young people to demonstrate their political rights. Thirdly, participation allows youth to be a source of, and share their knowledge; they are the experts on their unique experience and offer a perspective that may not occur to the adult researchers. Fourth, youth participation models the need for active participation in a democratic society, inspiring young people to not only identify the barriers and causes but to become part of the solution by taking action. Lastly, youth development can also



**Henderson Waaat!!!**

(Photovoice)

# Figure 2. AMPLIFY Action Enquiry Process



strengthen the awareness of the social development of young people.

In New Zealand, much work has been done around the participation of children and young people in decision making. The Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa is based on a positive youth development approach (Ministry of Youth Development, 2002), and a common understanding of what needs to happen for young people. This document provides a positive vision encouraging and supporting youth participation. It also provides a foundation to positive youth development through six key principles that can be easily implemented into practices to engage youth. These are:

1. Youth development is shaped by the 'big picture'
2. Youth development is about young people being connected
3. Youth development is based on a consistent strengths-based approach
4. Youth development happens through quality relationships
5. Youth development is triggered when young

people fully participate

6. Youth development needs good information.

(Ministry of Youth Development, 2002, p. 7-8)

When these principles are employed, young people are encouraged to contribute and have a sense of value and belonging to society, they have autonomy over their own future and feel positive and comfortable with their own identity. A positive youth development approach is strengths-based; it builds confidence, respects the participant's choice and rights and works in partnership with the participant (Ministry of Youth Development, 2002).

### Evaluation and positive youth development

Positive youth-adult partnerships provide better opportunities to understand the young people who participate in research (Serido, Borden & Perkins, 2011). Flexibility and plans which offer adequate opportunities to engage young people while getting a true representation of their view as the participant, are essential for researchers undertaking this type of research (Head, 2011). Indeed, Beazley,



We should make a tagging wall so we can stop tagging on fences, boxes, houses etc.

(Photovoice)

# Figure 3. AMPLIFY Photovoice process

## Workshop #1: What is research?

What is Participatory Action Research? Knowledge development - what does that mean? Who will see this project and who will benefit from it? What are our expectations of the project? What do we expect from each other?

## Workshop #2: Ethics and Information

What are research ethics and why are they important? What does 'consent' mean? Why do we need parents' consent? Exploring different ways in which data (information) is gathered in a research project.

## Workshop #3: SpeakOut exercise

Framing the project: Talking about our community, good things and less good things. Lots of activities - fun graph, cafe table, mapping exercise, cool spaces and dumb spaces, graffiti wall. This is where we start developing our research questions.

## Workshop #4: Introduction to photovoice

Two group activities that are aimed at learning about looking at photographs (coding and decoding): 'This is about' & 'Something of me'.

## Workshop #5: Getting creative with cameras

How to take great photos, learning some tricks of the trade from a professional photographer. Photo planning: where will we go? What do we really want to capture? If there was one photo we could share with people, what would it be?

## Workshop #6: Day with a camera

Groups of four, one camera per group. Walking around community - remember planning but also be spontaneous. Have fun!

## Workshop #7: Our photos 1

Narrowing our choices - choose the best photos per class (about 100 photos per class).

## Workshop #8: Our photos

Coding and analysis: Group and categorise photos.

## Workshop #9: Decoding, denotation and connotation

Decoding: Adding captions to photos. What is the difference between connotation and denotation?

## Workshop #10

Making our final choices and planning our photo exhibition.

Bessell, Ennew and Waterson (2009) refer to research methods and practices as 'fieldwork', reflecting that working in a partnership with young people is a personal experience, rather than an academic exercise. Positive youth development and participation are assisted by the understanding that every young person has areas of strengths, self-competency, and efficacy within themselves, and being supported by the people they are closest to (Powell and Smith, 2009).

In a research project that looked at best practice approaches for 9-13 year olds, we knew it was important to model the principles of positive youth development. Prior to the research process a review of the evidence supporting the participation of children and young people in evaluation was undertaken, in order to understand best practice approaches in research. In addition to the MPHS/ Point Research partnership, therefore, the research team also invested much time and effort into building trusting relationships with the young people involved in the research project. The meaningful participation of these young people rested on the following principles:

- young people were invited to be involved from the beginning of the programme;
- participation was voluntary;
- young people were supported to get involved in ways that best suited their needs, abilities,

interests, access needs and availability;

- there were no secrets; all information about the research was shared with the young people so they could make informed decisions around their participation;
- the young people were full participants (co-researchers) in the research project and were given opportunities to put forth their views and had the ability (along with other stakeholders) to influence decisions; and
- there were developmental benefits to their involvement, that is, they were able to develop skills and confidence with research methods and the research process.

The initial research plan proposed working with a small group of young people in a series of one-off workshops. Following the findings of the evidence review and in consultation with school principals, the part of the project that involved young people was designed to run as a classroom/group exercise over 10 weeks, with additional activities such as an exhibition, focus groups and a whānau dinner.

An action/reflection cycle was adopted as the underlying kaupapa of the project in order to enable the process of working with the young people to develop as needs and issues arose. The researchers started with an outline of a series of workshops and developed these as the weeks went on in response



Focus Group

to the capacity of the young researchers working with them. Ideally the young people would have participated in the action/reflection cycle, however the time constraints of working as part of the school curriculum meant that much of the time available with the research team was spent in action with a focus on developing the skills and confidence of the young people with research methods and processes.

Structural analysis assisted in identifying the power relationships that underlie the ontological space in which we were working. This was of particular interest to finding out the ways in which children aged 9 to 13 years need and/or want to be supported. A theoretical assumption directed at the notion “we live in an adult world” was increasingly realised as we moved through the project and shaped much of the analysis and thinking of the research team, particularly during the photovoice process.

### Developmental appropriateness

Engaging children and pre-adolescents in research requires knowledge and a good understanding of the barriers that are actual or perceived by the young person. Issues around access and barriers to the participation of children and young people in research suggest that the ethical and methodological choices made by researchers can significantly impact on participation. The changes that take place during the transition from childhood to adolescence can determine the young person’s ability to participate in research tasks, for example they may have issues with methods that do not take age-appropriate language or tasks into account. Similarly, young people may not understand what they have been asked to do or they may feel the researchers have perceived them as immature and not reflecting their true opinions (Beasley, Bessell, Ennew & Waterson, 2009). In their research on the capacity of children and young people aged 9-13 to take part in research activities, Coyle and colleagues suggest that children aged nine and over can participate in surveys and interviews, although data quality may be strongly influenced by reading and communication abilities (Coyle, Russell, Shields and Tanaka, 2007). The authors also believe that children under the age of 11 may have trouble with questions that are indirect or “depersonalised” and may need visual aids to assist with their comprehension. They suggest that data quality may be improved by creating questions that are simply stated, positively worded, limited in the number of possible responses, language-appropriate and interesting and exciting enough to maintain their attention.

When working with children and young people it is

important to use a combination of data collection analysis to improve data and research. Castrechini and London (2012) conclude that there is a need to create a data collection system that captures student and family participation in order to value young people’s experiences. Their study showed that looking at overall student outcomes rather than making isolated evaluations of the individual programmes provided a richer insight into the effects of community schools. Similarly, Bell and St Leger (2006) argue that authentic and significant youth participation involves young people taking an active role in all stages of decision-making on issues that affect them. Authenticity comes from the work that young people can do in gathering evidence to establish a genuine need, by identifying the logic of what they plan to do in order to address this need and then reflecting on the effects and outcomes of their activities. The authors also argue that youth participation brings value to the process of evaluation and research by providing the opportunity to enhance the individual development of youth by consulting with them and encouraging their contribution to decisions that affect them.

In this project, much emphasis was placed on working with the young people in ways that best suited their needs and abilities, which varied widely between groups. The year six and seven classes, for example, were more likely to offer a literal analysis of their data (e.g. their photos and SpeakOut activities), than the year eight class, which was able to extend the thinking and practice into a more critical space. The year seven class, with a number of students with learning and behavioural difficulties, engaged enthusiastically with every step of the research process and by doing so allowed the adult researchers a critical insight into best practice approaches for 9-13 year olds.

### Engaging young people in evaluation

Empowerment evaluation approaches offer children and young people more than just an opportunity to provide data; rather, they aim for purposeful engagement in evaluation that provides genuine opportunities for young people’s engagement (Bell and St Leger 2006). UNICEF (2001) believe that choosing relevant issues that are linked to children and young people’s day-to-day experience, ensuring the project has the capacity to make a difference, putting aside adequate time and resources and setting realistic expectations and goals, are key to ensuring the effective and genuine participation of

children and young people in research and decision making.

Horsh, Little, Chase Smith, Goodyear, and Harris (2002) discuss five key elements to successful youth involved research and evaluation projects. They are:

**1. Organisational and community readiness.**

When embarking on evaluation and research, an organisation must be prepared for the responsibilities and demands of implementing new practices, processes, or services as determined from the outcomes off the youth-involved research and evaluation work. The authors noted the importance of educating the adults to listen and respect youth involved in the research and evaluation project. They refer to this as 'readiness', and recommend a coaching model that involves gradual youth involvement in the research and evaluation process by using trainers from the organisation who work both with the adults and young people throughout the project.

**2. Adequate training and support for involved youth.** It is vital to follow a manageable step process of evaluation and research that can be easily understood by young people, in order for them to understand what is required. One of the ways this may be implemented is via partnership training alongside an 'expert'. The key issues to be mindful of when training youth are: when to

commence the training, what type of training is needed, and how often training is required. It is also important that the involvement of young people matches their skills and interests. Young people need to be given evaluation and research roles that are appropriate to their level of development and expertise.

**3. Adequate training and support for adult staff.**

Adults working with young people on research and evaluation projects need training and support. Often this involves educating the adult on the ways in which they can work with and view young people.

**4. Selecting the right team.** A good team needs to include diversity from its members, such as ethnicity, gender, age and socio-economic backgrounds, along with an interest in the project topic. There is also a need for multiple roles where young people are able to take a leadership or supportive role depending on their strengths and inclination.

**5. Sustaining youth involvement.** Maintaining youth involvement is a challenge, as young people have many outside constraints and commitments such as family/home life, school, and extracurricular activities. The key factors that may motivate young people to be involved include using the research and evaluation as a vehicle for change on issues they identify as important to them, and the development of lasting relationships between the adult and young people involved in a project. Role modelling is also a key factor, such as developing roles and opportunities for the experienced youth involved in the project to mentor new members to the project. The last key factor is practical, providing food as nourishment for hungry youth not only supports better concentration but acts as a relationship-building opportunity for sharing a meal and providing valuable time for discussions and conversations.

Providing genuine opportunities for young people's involvement in programme development is consistent with empowerment evaluation approaches that aim to increase the probability of achieving programme success (Bell and St Leger, 2006). This also allows a valuable opportunity for them to construct their identities as change-makers, "the act of doing becomes the act of becoming as people grow into their roles and responsibilities" (Fetterman, 2003, p. 90).

Working with younger children (e.g. primary-school age) brings another set of factors into consideration.



Cafe Table, SpeakOut

Te One (2010) identifies several methodological challenges when involving primary-school-aged children in research. She suggests that a framework around the participation of primary-school-aged children in research should involve:

- **Identifying barriers.** Barriers may include funding constraints, questions about the appropriateness of the research, a lack of knowledge, skills or abilities for some research tasks, time constraints and access or communication issues.
- **Negotiating engagement and role clarification.** Ensure tasks and roles are clearly outlined, ethical consent processes are undertaken and access to data is discussed and negotiated if necessary.
- **Paying attention to research design.** Ensure that the methods chosen suit the developmental ages and stages of the children involved. Have a sense of coherence between the theory, the methodology and the research design.
- **Providing suitable resources to aid communication.** For example, counselling for sensitive research topics, food to aid concentration.
- **Providing a suitable work environment.** Having children become part of a research team means they may be entitled to basic working conditions, such as a comfortable workplace and compensation (e.g. book vouchers, certificates).
- **Reflecting, monitoring and reviewing.** Te One recommends taking time for reflection - paying particular attention to the diversity of learning and social experiences of primary-school-aged children.

In designing this research project, the researchers paid particular attention to empowerment evaluation approaches. Early on, roles were clarified between the researchers and the young people, with a joint decision that we were to be a research team. Although it was sometimes difficult to maintain a relationship as co-researchers, particularly within a school setting where adults are nearly always authority figures, the researchers implemented a number of strategies to try to break down the "authority" barrier, such as:

- we asked the young people to call us by our first names, rather than "Miss" and "Sir";
- we tried to spend as little time as possible standing up in front of a white board, preferring

instead to sit as a group, either in chairs or on the floor; and

- behaviour management was largely the responsibility of the teachers.

We were also cognisant of the methodological challenges in working with young people, and employed a number of strategies to try to overcome these. First, the entire project was treated as a negotiated process, whereby we negotiated with our young researchers and their teachers as to roles and next steps. Healthy food was provided where sessions were long or where participants needed extra energy (e.g. the SpeakOut process and the photovoice walk). There were several practical challenges to overcome, for example many of the young people did not own raincoats or rain gear, which was a challenge when one of our planned photovoice days was very wet (raincoats were provided by the school on this occasion), or they had unsuitable footwear for walking. Similarly, despite learning the basics of photography, some young people had little or no experience with cameras and were hesitant to use them. Time constraints meant that there was little time for reflection as a big research team, and the reflection - which often lead to next steps - was mainly done by the adult researchers. Overall, however, the adult researchers were comfortable that we were forging genuine research relationships based on trust and mutual respect. Many of these relationships have been sustained long after the research process has finished, and members of the research team continue to make up the bulk of enrolments at the Hub West High Tech YouthStudio.

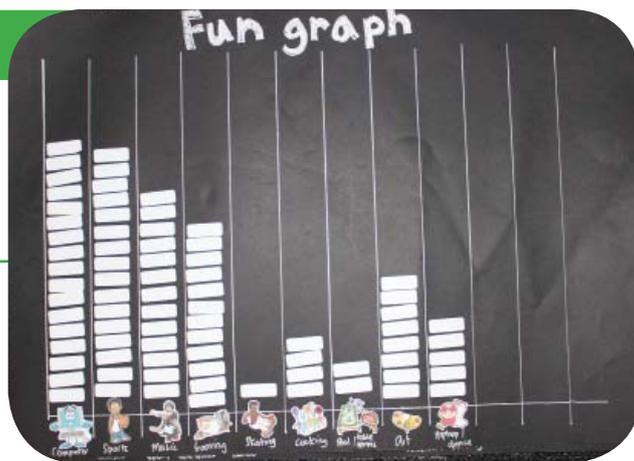
## Ethical considerations

Researchers who work with children are morally obligated to obtain their informed consent (Te One, 2010). There are, however, issues involved in gaining consent from school-aged children, particularly those in the younger school years. First, children and young people who are obliged to attend school may feel they are also obliged to participate in research in a school-based setting, particularly if it is presented as school work (David, Edwards and Alldred, 2001). As Kellet and Ding (2004, as cited in Te One, 2010) argue, this may verge on coercion. Second, informed consent is ideally given when participants fully understand the extent of their participation, the benefits they get from participation and the outcomes of their participation. Such things, however, are difficult to understand at the beginning of the research

# Figure 4. AMPLIFY SpeakOut Process

## Fun Graph /Travel Graph

This involved participants building sections of a large bar graph, using stickers and pictures to represent the types of recreation they enjoy and what methods they use to travel around their community



## Cafe Table

Six participants were seated around a table, which had a tablecloth and placemats which could be drawn on. Food was placed in the centre of the table. Young people at the table were asked to record which sorts of things were important for them to feel interested and engaged, and to articulate how they liked to be treated by adults, particularly when participating in activities with other young people.

## Graffiti Wall

Sheets of paper covering one wall in a school hall were used to record the activities young people take part in after school and the types of activities they would like to take part in on weekends and after school.



## Mapping Exercises

### Cool spaces and dumb spaces

Young people were presented with a large map of the MPHS area, and were asked to record the spaces they enjoyed being in, and the spaces they didn't like going, and the reasons for this.

### Where you live map

This involved the young people indicating where they live, where they spend most of their time and where they travel to. A line was drawn between the three places to give us some idea of the movement of young people in the local area.



process, which is when consent is typically sought. Flewitt (2005) suggests that checking for on-going agreement through different phases of the research can possibly provide a solution to the issue of informed consent. Third, children may not have consented to take part in a research process and may only be participating because their parent/caregiver has consented (Campbell, 2008).

As the editor of a report on involving children and young people in research, Loveridge (2010) notes that there are particular ethical, theoretical and methodological issues that arise when involving young people as participants in research and evaluation projects. This report notes that there are particular issues relating to conducting research in a New Zealand context, particularly with regards to obtaining consent from participants who are Māori or Pasifika. In the report, Te Maro (2010) notes that:

“ For indigenous cultures, interconnected collectivist and kinship organisational structures can be in conflict with western ethical codes of conduct. Who gives consent to participation in research and how the research contributions of participants are used to benefit them rather than solely contributing to ‘knowledge’ are complex issues for research involving Māori children, who are part of the larger iwi as well as being part of a whānau.

(p. 51)

Both Loveridge and Te Maro recommend that researchers and evaluators address cultural expectations around research processes, paying particular attention to whether both individual and family or whānau (as opposed to parental) consent should be negotiated.

In their 2003 document on engaging children in decision-making, the Ministry of Social Development recommends that the following ethical considerations are taken into account when working with children:

1. **Participation.** Ensure no harm will come to any children as a result of their participation and they are not coerced into participating, and can opt out at any time
2. **Safety.** Have a plan in place if any safety concerns are raised. Involve more than one adult to avoid unsupervised contact. Adults who do take part in the project need to be experienced and trusted. Let children know where they can go for help and give them choices in how they

participate and with whom they participate.

3. **Information.** Make sure children have enough information to decide on their participation. Ensure parents and caregivers are given information about the project and let children know how they can access information they provide.
4. **Consent.** Consent should be gained from both children and their parents or caregivers (if under 18) and children should be fully informed about all aspects of the project, and their involvement, in order to give their informed consent.
5. **Confidentiality.** Let children know whether their contributions are private or anonymous and what types of information will be recorded (Ministry of Social Development, 2003)

There were several ethical issues that arose during this research. Two consent forms were produced, one for the young people, and one for their parents and/or whānau (see Appendix 2). One child was refused permission to participate (no reasons were given), and needed to go to the library when the research team met, which for the researchers created its own set of issues around exclusion and access to knowledge. Although the young researchers were also reminded at the beginning of each classroom session that their participation was voluntary, there was a sense that, as the research was done in school time, the young researchers had to take part whether they wanted to or not. As one teacher said “they don’t get to choose whether to do reading, they don’t get to choose whether or not to do P.E, this is just the same.”

Taking photos in public places also raises its own set of permission and ethical considerations. As part of the photovoice process a professional photographer was bought in to help extend the knowledge of the young researchers around photography and photographic processes. His advice was that if people were in a public place, then it was permissible to photograph them, however the adult researchers deterred the young researchers from taking photos of people other than themselves, just to be on the safe side.

Overall, the research team are satisfied that the research process was one which prioritised the informed participation of young people and addressed any ethical and/or safety issues as they arose.



When pessimism takes over, we have to change our point of VIEW

(Photovoice)

## Research Findings

Before considering the best practice approaches for 9-13 year olds in the MPHS area, it is important to understand the realities of these children within the context of the communities and families in which they live.

Statistically, McLaren Park Henderson South is a high-deprivation, low-socioeconomic area.<sup>1</sup> The suburbs of Henderson South and McLaren Park have 50 per cent more single-parent households (29 per cent Henderson South, 32 per cent McLaren Park, compared with 19 per cent for the Auckland Region), a lower median income and a higher unemployment rate, than the average for the Auckland region. One-third of residents aged 15 and over have no formal qualification (compared with 20 per cent of residents in the Auckland region).<sup>2</sup>

Students in Henderson-Massey are more likely to be stood down from school than are their counterparts in the Auckland region.

Henderson-Massey has the highest number of children aged between 5-14 of any local board area in

<sup>1</sup> The New Zealand Deprivation Index is a measure of the level of socioeconomic deprivation in small geographic areas of New Zealand (meshblocks). It is created using Census data for: car and telephone access; receipt of means-tested benefits; unemployment; household income; sole parenting; educational qualifications; home ownership; and home living space. The index ranges from 1 to 10. A score of 10 indicates that people are living in the most deprived 10 per cent of New Zealand. McLaren Park and Henderson South both have an NZDep score of 9.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix Two for a statistical profile of the Henderson South and McLaren Park areas.

Auckland, with an estimated 18,423 children in 2013. This number is projected to grow substantially over the next decade to plateau at around 22,000 in 2021.

There is much evidence as to the adverse impacts on children and young people of living in low-socio-demographic areas. Children and young people who reside in a low-income neighbourhood are more likely to experience adverse mental and physical health problems, are more likely to be affected by crime and have lower rates of educational achievement than children raised in more affluent neighbourhoods (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn, 2001).

Living in a low-sociodemographic area does not, however, necessarily determine poor outcomes. The area is complex, and recent research shows that there are many mediating factors. Children who can picture a positive future, for example, are more resilient and better able to actively structure their environments towards their future goals (O'Dougherty Wright and Masten, 2013). Moreover, understanding and promoting positive developmental pathways can have a significant impact on the achievement of positive outcomes for "at risk" children and young people (O'Dougherty Wright, Masten and Narayan 2013).

## MPHS Community and Family Context

Participants in this research identified a number of current social issues faced by children and young people in the MPHS area including poverty, single parents, social instability, and safety and security. In addition to these social issues, many children have little or no access to technology and 21st century learning tools. Whilst access to computers and out-of-school activities may almost become a secondary consideration given the complex social issues these children face, it is just these things that many of those in the community will likely improve the quality of life for the children and young people and offer them a brighter future.

“ Extracurricular activities accelerate learning, no doubt about it. And 90 per cent of our children don't have access to that, they go home and sit in front of the TV or go outside and play. But (they don't get) the rich learning that can be put on top of that. I've taught in high decile schools and you see it happening, children being picked up for ballet, tap, violin and horse riding. The richness comes from those learning experiences.”

School principal

Much work is being done within the community to engender a sense of community pride and belonging. Both the primary and intermediate schools place much emphasis on community engagement and there are a number of different community-driven projects currently underway. Projects include an “In the neighbourhood” resource manual, which is designed to facilitate and support local residents to build community participation with their street; environmental restoration and education through Project Twin Streams and the Milbrook Edible Garden, a collaborative community approach to food security.

“ I start from the premise our school is the community, the community is the school. They work in with us, we work in with them. It's very important. MPHS (Inc.) are part of us and we are part of them, they're on our Board of Trustees and we are all together on the Neighbourhood Policing Team, looking at all sides of the community, getting involved in the community action together, Workforce Green, the Men's Shed working out of the school, it's all part and parcel of the whole concept that the school and the community are one and the same. For us, the success of the school depends on the success of the community.”

School principal 2



They can't see what goes on inside. They can't help if they don't know. We have to show them because if we don't we'll be stuck in this forever

(Photovoice)

Local leaders believe there are many positive changes occurring in the community. They see more connection, communication, and support in the community. Moreover, local agencies work together to ensure there is support for local action.

“ If your street is unsafe, it's only because you allow it to be unsafe. You as a community member need to step up, and we're there, the agencies and the whole team, we're there to help you and support you. If there's a drug house in your street, if there are gangs in your street, family violence in your street? Yep? Speak up.”

School principal 2

Community spaces, such as schools and the new Hub West building, reflect the character of the local community and are designed to be welcoming and inclusive.

“ We changed the signage around the school to make it more culturally inclusive, so when parents enter they see the whakatoki and the Island welcomes, bilingual classes, and then it reflects their identity as a community. A lot of that has come from the community.

School principal

For the parents who participated in this project, the strengths of the community are the people, the location (close to amenities), and the schools. Whilst most parents questioned the overall safety of the wider community, believing that there is an element of the community that may have a 'bad influence' on their children, they do believe that their immediate neighbourhoods are safe.

“ Everyone says “it’s Henderson South, it’s unsafe”. But it’s safe. Sometimes I have an open window for a week and nothing happens...Sometimes I think ‘oh, I forgot to lock the door’. I feel safe because of all the neighbours and all the street, we have got a good village, together it’s very important

Parent

“ For us the most worrying thing is the bad influences around (our children). We sit down every afternoon before we have our prayer meeting and we explain to them the bad influences and from then on we start teaching them how to avoid those influences. And they understand what we are trying to do for them. We are trying to teach them the best we can to provide them with a good future.

Parent

### Perceptions of the community

A key part of this project involved photovoice, where the 9 - 13 year olds took photos to illustrate what their lives are like. From their photos we understand that the adult world for the young people in the MPHS community can sometimes be scary, unkind and lonely. We can also see, however, that they identify proudly with where they live and are proud of the many public spaces in their community, particularly those in which they or other young people have contributed. They are upset when their community is spoiled with rubbish and pollution, and most of them believe that graffiti enhances, rather than spoils, public spaces. They celebrate the flora of the area in which they live, and believe they are lucky to live amongst such natural beauty. They are proud of



It’s the life, to be smart

(Photovoice)

their different cultures and like to see these different cultures reflected in their community. Most of all, however, we see from their photos that life for these young people is filled with hope and possibility.

Most of the children and young people involved in this project feel safe in their community most of the time. When presented with a map of the community and asked to select 'cool' spaces and 'dumb' spaces, the children selected 244 'cool' spaces and 82 'dumb' spaces, of which 33 were 'scary' spaces (see Figure 6).

The young people defined cool spaces as those that were good places to hang out, as places where they felt safe, where there were good shops or where they felt they had contributed (such as stream planting). Most of the young people nominated their school, their homes, their friends' homes, local parks, the nearby shopping mall, and local shops (e.g. bakeries, dairies) as cool spaces.

Dumb spaces were defined as such because they were "boring", because young people didn't feel safe when they were there (e.g. "there are bullies here", "my mum's car got jacked here"), or they had a "scary feeling" about them, such as old, empty houses and long, dim alleyways. The young people were most likely to nominate a neighbourhood location as scary if it was uncared for (e.g. litter, broken bottles, graffiti, smashed windows), if it appeared dangerous (e.g. cars on busy roads, trains at train stations), if it was frequented by older teens (particularly if there was fighting, drug taking, or other delinquent behaviour), or if they were scared by the people who frequent the space; many children, for example, named the local library as a scary space largely due to its close proximity to the district courthouse.

Many of the young people identified drug, or tinny houses, as dumb spaces. Whilst it was not possible for the researchers to independently verify the location of the drug houses indicated by the children, three groups of children at three separate times independently located at least six tinny houses at the same locations.

### Travel within the community

Most of the young people who participated in this project indicated that they live close to the school, and very few travel from outside of the school zone to get to school.

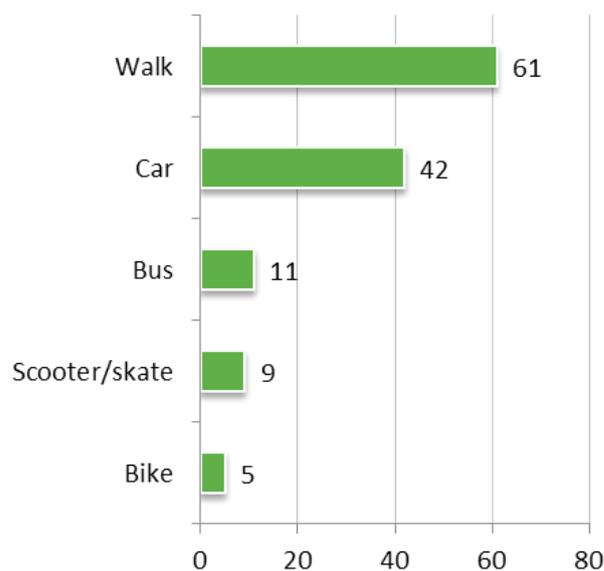
The main form of travel to and from school for the

young people is by foot. As shown in Figure 5, nearly nine out of 10 young people walk to school. One in six also travel by car, 16 per cent use the bus, 13 per cent use their scooter or skateboard and seven per cent bike.

As evidenced during the photovoice phase of the project, many of the young people have extensive local knowledge, probably due to the fact that they walk around their community. Boys in particular are extremely familiar with the local area and know all the short cuts (both marked and unmarked).

During the week, the young people indicated that they were unlikely to spend much time out of their local community, mainly moving within a 2km radius between home, school, and local shops.

Figure 5. Main forms of travel to and from school %\*



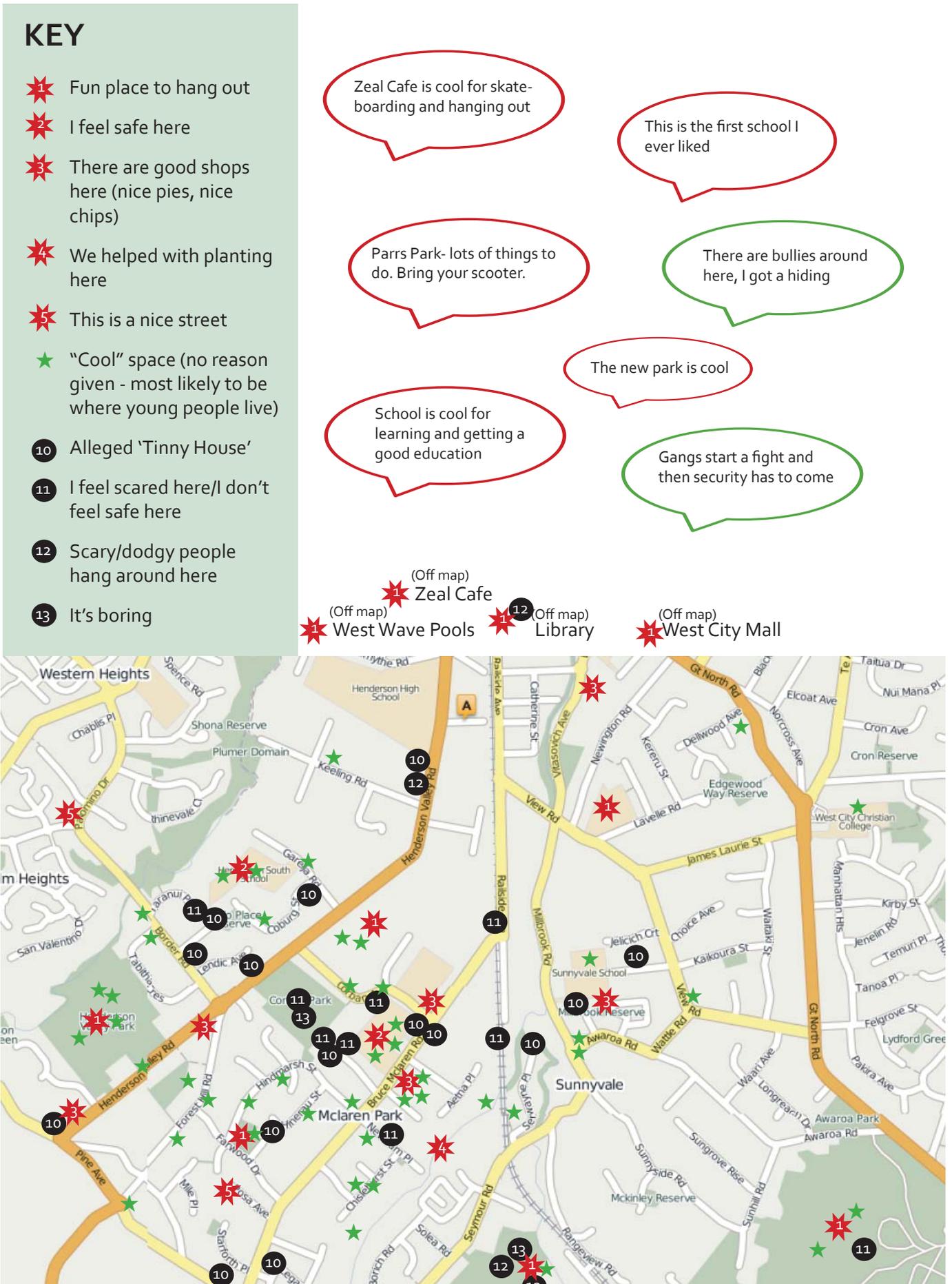
### Family Context

Many of the children who participated in this research have responsibilities and obligations outside of their schoolwork and after-school activities. During the period that we worked with the children we learned that some care for younger siblings, often in conjunction with older siblings, but in certain cases they give sole care to younger siblings for short periods of time. Others care for parents who are mentally or physically unwell, or assist in the care of grandparents. Many are children in single-parent families.

The parents and whānau who took part in this project appear to be well-networked into their neighbourhood and communities, through school, church, volunteer activities and the like. Many of

\*Note that percentages add up to more than 100% as more than one response was allowed

# Figure 6: Cool Spaces and Dumb Spaces





**If you want us to be healthy why do you make apples more expensive than coke?**

(Photovoice)

the parents were first- or second-generation New Zealanders, most of who have emigrated from the Pacific Islands or South East Asia. For these parents in particular, their children’s education is of paramount importance.

“ My major (dream) is their education. To get through their education really good, and to get good jobs. To know what they’re doing and what they want to be doing in the future.

Parent

Parents value homework as an important contributor to a good education. They put aside time for their children to complete their homework, they help do the homework, and they restrict other activities until the homework is finished.

“ I’m trying to help them through as well, not by just telling them what to do, but helping them with what they are actually doing. They research projects (and) I kind of help alongside them, so they know that we want to help them through.

Parent

“ We help them at home with their homework. We have to discipline them with things like games, TV and stuff, and we have time every afternoon – 7.00 after the news we turn the TV off, that’s their homework time.

Parent

“ (They need to do) homework before other activities because they are just too tired when they get home. They need to get their homework done first.

Parent

## The recreation needs of young people aged 9-13

### Team, groups and after school activities

Most children in this study belonged to a sports team or club, most of which were school-based or local. Of the children who told us about the groups and teams they belong to:

- 23 play rugby or rugby league;
- 14 play netball;
- 9 play soccer;
- 6 do martial arts;
- 5 participate in swimming squads or do swimming lessons;
- 5 play hockey;
- 4 play basketball;
- 10 participate in other sports-based activities, such as tennis, touch, cricket, table tennis, t-ball, cross country, softball, gym and dog training;
- 6 belong to a youth service group, such as St Johns, a youth group or Girl Guides; and
- 10 learn a musical instrument or belong to a hip hop or dance group

Given the numbers who belong to a sports teams or group, it is unsurprising to learn that most of

the young people participate in sports or sporting activities after school. It does seem, however, that without organised sports the young people would have little opportunity for active recreation, given that they next prefer to use the computer (most like to use the Facebook site), watch TV, eat, or do homework (see Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Typical after-school activities (unprompted)**

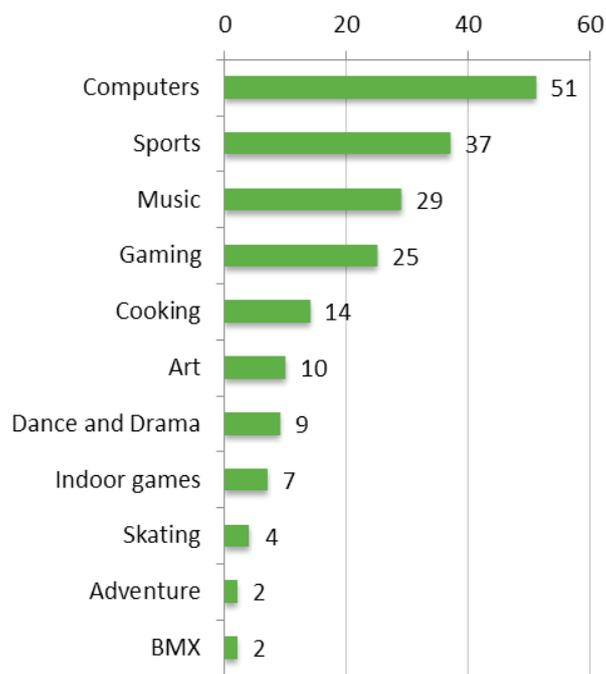
Activity	n=	%
Organised sports	60	87
Facebook/Computer	51	74
TV/Movies	47	68
Gaming (PSP, X Box)	41	59
Eat and drink	37	54
Homework/reading/library	31	45
Recreation (e.g. park, trampoline)	30	43
Shopping/mall	21	30
Music/performance/art	20	29
Go to church	14	20
Hang with friends	14	20
Sleep	11	16
Spend time with family	7	10
Youth group	4	6
Cook	3	4

### Activities young people would like to do out of school

The research used three methods to determine what sorts of activities the young people want to do after school and on the weekends. First, a “fun graph” with pre-defined categories was built by each class, based on which activities young people thought would be the “most fun” if they could do them after school. Again, unsurprisingly, computers and sports were at the top of the list (see Figure 8).

Second, the young people were asked, individually and unprompted, what organised activities they would most like to do after school and in the holidays (e.g. as an after-school or holiday programme). Again, the category orders are reasonably similar; however, a number of young people (26 of 69) indicated that they would like to do activities together with their friends or family, and a number also indicated that they would like to participate in activities such as camping, shooting, and fishing.

**Figure 8: Preferred after-school activities, ranked on “fun” (n)**



Last, we asked young people what their ‘dream’ activities were; what they would like to do if money, access, and opportunity were no object. Some young people dreamed big, e.g. “stop a war,” “live in space”, whilst others dreamed slightly smaller, e.g. “teach my own class”, or “ride in a go cart”.

Besides career aspirations (e.g. be Prime Minister, King of Samoa, be in a movie, be famous), the dreams of the young people can be loosely grouped into one of five categories:

- 35 would like to travel. Most of these would like to travel the world, although some are happy to stay closer to home e.g. “go to Dunedin”
- 29 would like to learn a new skill, including photography, a new language (most likely Spanish or French), a musical instrument, cooking, or driving.
- 26 would like to participate in a sports activity, most likely martial arts, although one would like to “go swimming every day”.
- 17 dream of acquiring goods, most likely laptops or iPads. One would like a Ferrari.
- 12 dream of participating in a performance activity, such as choir or a drama production.

Many young people, particularly during the focus groups and SpeakOut, talked about their dream to “make a difference”, and to feel as though they were contributing to making their community a



Local youth workers and the local school principals also believe that it is important to engage parents in the design and development of activities. Interestingly, the school principals believe that it's important for the parents to have somewhere to engage with their children's activities other than the school.

“ Because of the development of the young person, the parents really need to be there, they are key. Parents should be involved right from the start.

West Auckland Youth Activity Provider

“ Lots and lots of the people in our community failed at school. And they see school as the symbol of their failure. It's a major psychological barrier to get parents into the school, who actually failed at school...If they can be dovetailed into the community centre, and the youth centre, then they don't have the same stigma. They will be quite happy to come along and take part, and you're breaking down that barrier.

Principal 2

## Family Activities

Many family members at the whānau dinner indicated that they would like to participate in activities *with* their children. They believed that taking part in organised, community-based family activities would allow them to have fun as a family, to meet other families in the community, to see how their children interact with their peers, and to see the skills and expertise of their children in different areas.

“ It would be good to invite the parents to come and do something with the kids. Sports would be good – parents versus kids.

Parent

“ We want to have fun with our children. I wish my parents had fun with me. They might have been able to see a bit better what was going on in my life, what I needed.

Parent

“ I would like to have one night once a month to come out and have fun. Meet other parents and do different activities.

Parent

Parents suggested that the community consider hosting a monthly “family fun night” where parents and children participate in activities together and then join in a shared dinner. They believed they would be more likely take part in activities that involved their whole family.

“ I came along tonight [to the dinner] because I thought it would be fun, and because our whole family was invited. Sometimes it is just me and my daughter, and I wish that the whole family could come along.

Parent

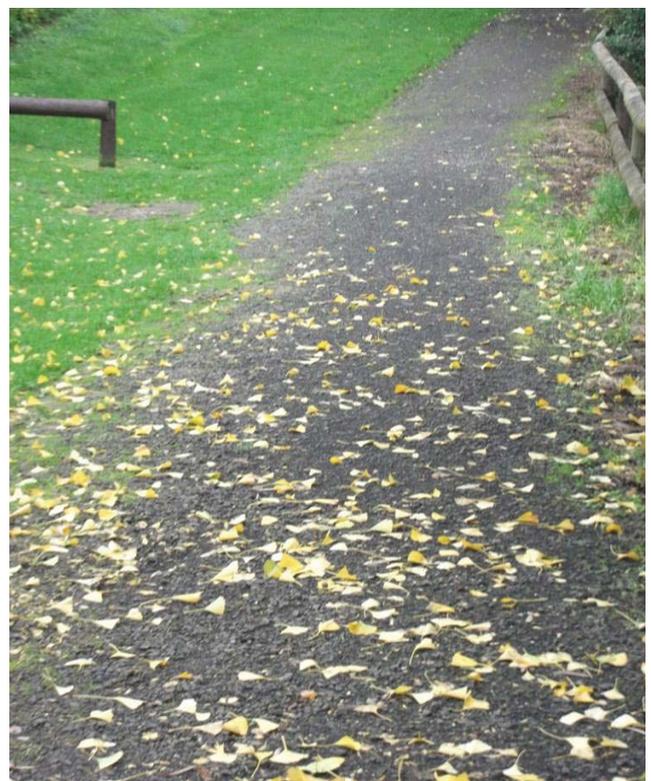
“ It's easier to come along if you're going to have fun and catch up with people that you know.

Parent

Parents believe that getting to know others in their community is what can help to keep their children safe.

“ I want my kids to be in a good community, get to know other parents. It makes kids feel good. Then everyone is looking out for each other.

Parent



**We all have the pathway to a better life, we just have to open our eyes and realise it.**

(Photovoice)

Both school principals believe that the support and involvement of parents is not only important for skill acquisition (for both parents and children), but may also assist the community to connect and grow.

“ (Our community needs to) offer programmes to parents that they could join to upskill their children.

Parent

“ Getting the youth and the parents working together...I think it's got amazing potential.

Parent

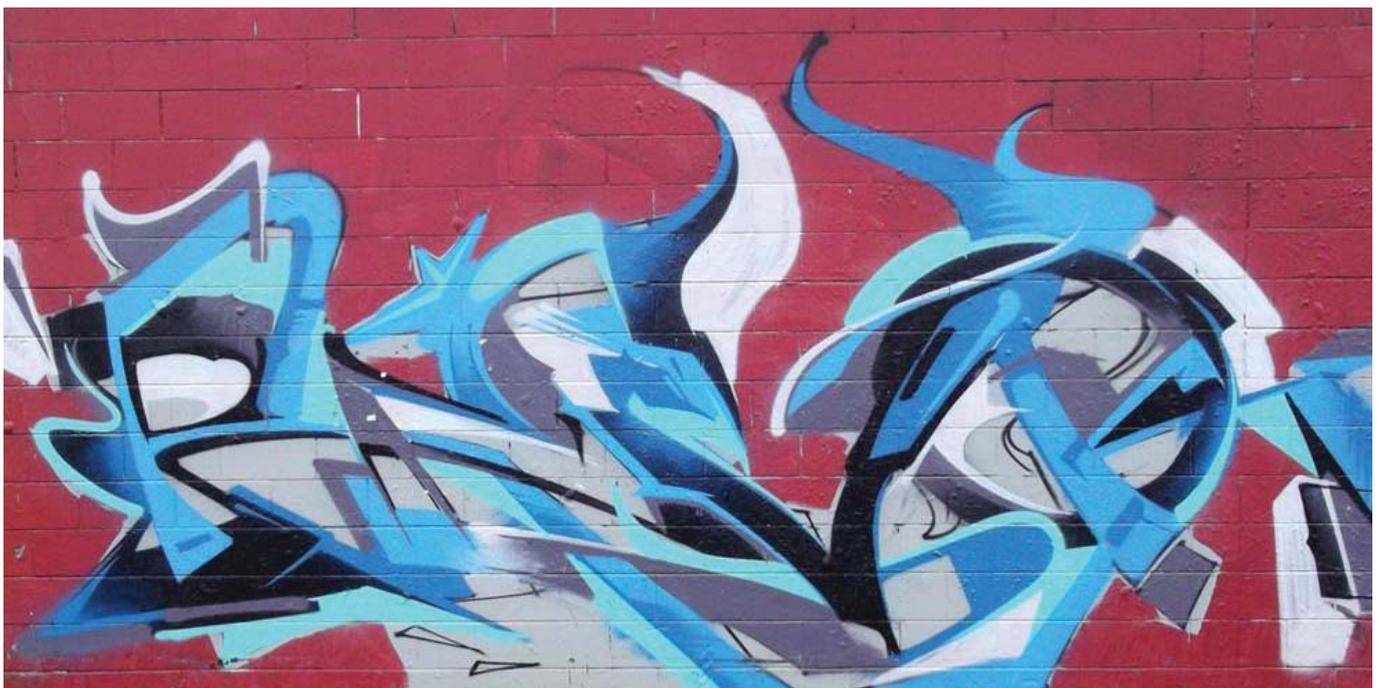
Activities that parents thought they might like to participate in as a family included:

- Debating (children vs. parents)
- Charades
- A water-fight
- Bullrush
- Performance evening
- Cricket
- Dodge-ball
- Quiz night (e.g. are you smarter than a 12 year old, kids vs. parents tables).

● ● ●

**Parents have significant influence over the activities their children take part in, and are unlikely to allow their child to participate in an activity if they aren't fully satisfied with the type, timing, structure and safety of the activity.**

● ● ●



It's a masterpiece of destruction, and it's cool because it's bad.

(Photovoice)

## Active and meaningful engagement

### How young people want to be treated

The young people in this project are equally as clear as to how they want to be treated as they are about the activities in which they want to take part. For these young people, respect is the most important principle of practice that adults should heed when working with 9-13 year olds. Respect involves adults talking “kindly” and “nicely”, treating young people as they would treat each other, not talking over young people, and not shouting at them.

Responsibility is the second-most important principle of practice. These young people indicated that they want to be asked for their opinion and have their suggestions and answers taken seriously, and they want to know what the ‘plan’ is. They want to learn by doing, and be given the time and opportunity to figure things out for themselves, as well as some ownership of the process.

The young people also believe that encouraging positive relationships between peers and between themselves and adults is an important part of working with this age group. They would like to be encouraged to work together with peers, as well as people not in their peer group (e.g. older or younger children). They need, however, reassurance that adults are available if the younger children or older teens that they are working with start acting up.

### Gender differences

There are some gender differences in how boys and girls would like to be treated. The boys, for the most part, indicated that they were happy to go along with the group. The girls, on the other hand, want to stand out and be recognised for their talents by peers, parents and teachers. They want to be seen as “individuals” who are capable and skilled at things other than schoolwork.

### Encouraging Participation

The young people indicated that they were more likely to want to participate in an activity if it’s fun and interesting, and their friends are involved. They are more likely to take part with the encouragement of family and friends.

Interestingly, once young people were involved with an activity, they indicated that they were more likely to stick with it if they learned something or improved their skills, if they received positive feedback from peers (e.g. “people liking my stuff”), or made new friends with interests in common.

Lastly, some of the young people felt that it was also

important if they contribute to something bigger, if they had a chance to have their voice heard, or they felt like they were becoming “part of something” exciting.

### Barriers to participation

For parents, the greatest barriers to their children’s participation are children’s time (fitting in activities around homework and other commitments), parental availability to drop off and pick up children from activities, and cost. The parents we talked to were particularly wary of hidden costs e.g. a free programme which charges \$60 for ‘materials’.

### Safety

Physical, educational (e.g. not putting their education at risk), and emotional safety was an important consideration for both young people and their parents.

Parents are unlikely to allow their children to participate in activities if they do not believe that the activity is safe, or if they do not have enough information with which to make this decision.

For parents, safety involves being provided with written information about:

- the activity e.g. what’s involved, duration, commitment required;
- the adults involved in the activity (what they look like and what their qualifications are);
- what their child will learn and how the activity will benefit their child;
- the anticipated gender and age of other participants (e.g. is it open to both boys and girls? Will their child be the youngest or the oldest participant?); and
- contact information, particularly so they can contact organisers while their child is on the course (in case of absence, or to check if their child is at the activity).

Parents also asked that they be notified when their child reached the after-school activity, as they often had no way of knowing if their child was at the activity or not, as well as being informed when their child leaves the activity, particularly when the child is walking home.

Parents of girls indicated that they were more likely to send their child to an activity if a female staff member was present.

Young people were mostly concerned with the age of other participants in the activity, and would prefer other participants to be of a similar age to them.



At least you know...  
...to get out of the house.

*(Photovoice)*

# Recommendations

This collaborative enquiry has provided us with a number of insights into the activities and approaches for young people aged 9-13 in the McLaren Park Henderson South community. In addition to these, the research has a number of recommendations for practice.

There is a very clear focus in the data generated by the participants on recreation and activities. The key to working with the 9-13 year olds in this community, however, is to understand how we may use their need and desire for recreation activities to help support greater social self-efficacy and give young people opportunities to contribute to their community, build strong connections with others and experience educational success.

## Responding to the needs of 9-13 year olds

### Activities

School and community-based activities are the primary means through which we can engage 9-13 year olds in order to assist their positive social, emotional, and academic development.

The activities most 9-13 year olds in the MPHS community would like to participate in involve computers, sports, music, gaming, cooking, art and adventure activities (e.g. camping and fishing). Many already participate in these activities in a formal (e.g.

sports team) or informal context (e.g. playing on the computer after school).

Evidence suggests that the types of activities that respond to the needs of both parents and children include activities based around sports, art, food and nutrition, and technological skill development. In addition, providing activities to help young people explore their potential capabilities can unleash their dreams and aspirations and provide them with a range of future pathways.

Parents of 9-13 year olds have significant influence over which organised after-school activities their children take part in. The emphasis placed by parents on education and development dictates that activities must be more than simply something to fill in time after school and in the holidays. Instead, activities must have a developmental focus (e.g. assist the young person to develop confidence, competence, self esteem and resilience) with an emphasis on education and learning. The involvement of 9-13 year olds in an activity is therefore dependent on providing activities that respond to the needs of parents, as well as the needs of the young people themselves.

This research recommends that providers of youth activities consider offering activities for 9-13 year olds that involve:

- opportunities to participate in sports-based activities, with a focus on teamwork and skill development. Martial arts activities are especially recommended;
- access to supervised computers and technology which can be used in a developmental (as opposed to entertainment) way;
- opportunities to build and learn new skills, such as a new language, a musical instrument, cooking or photography;
- the development of artistic and performance skills, and opportunities to showcase these skills to the wider community; and
- focus on the development of problem-solving skills, goal setting, positive relationships and positive learning experiences.

### Family activities

Many of the young people indicated they would like to participate in activities alongside friends and family. Parents, too, expressed a desire to participate in organised, community-based family activities.

This research therefore recommends that community providers consider providing community-based family activities, particularly activities which have a “grown-ups versus kids” element to them.

### Responding to the needs of parents

Appealing to parental expectations may require programmes to pay attention to best-practice evidence which tells us that programmes for this age group should focus on developing problem solving skills, goal

setting, fostering positive relationships and offering positive learning experiences.

Whilst the MPHS community experiences many issues typical in low socio-demographic communities, it is also a community that many adult residents experience as supportive, close-knit, inclusive and safe, and that children experience as ‘cool’ and safe, most of the time.

Understanding 9-13 year olds within the context of their community means that providers within the MPHS community must heed safety principles, as well as acknowledge that children have other responsibilities and obligations outside of school, including meeting parental expectations around education and homework.

### Safety

Safety is extremely important to both parents and 9-13 year olds; moreover, parents and caregivers also have a legal responsibility to make reasonable provision for the care and supervision of any child under 14.

Parents in this research indicated that they are more likely to send their child to an activity if they know the activity is safe, if they know the staff involved, and if getting their child to and from the activity is hassle-free (e.g. within walking distance of home or school). Whilst parents appeared comfortable with allowing their child to make their own way to an activity, the parent needs to be reassured that their child has arrived safely. If the child is also making their own way home, the parent also needs to know when the child left the activity. In addition to safety before and after the activity, parents also need to know that their child is in safe hands whilst at the activity e.g. that staff are appropriately qualified, that there is a mix of male and female staff members, and that there are more likely to be other children at the activity the same age and gender as their child.

For the young people, safety is about being in a safe and comfortable environment. These are environments



**When we play rugby we always play on the rocks. We want to play on grass.**

*(Photovoice)*

# STUDIO MPHS - High Tech Youth Studio

(Licenced member of the Intel Computer Network)

Studio MPHS is an after-school, drop-in centre for young people aged between 10 to 18 years. Studio MPHS is a learning community where young people become members. Membership is free for young people who reside in the McLaren Park and Henderson South community.

'Learning by Designing' is the mantra of Studio MPHS. The members take ownership of their own learning and are supported by adult mentors to start and finish creative projects that incorporate different forms of technology. For example, projects include, graphic design, film production, music production, fashion design, computer programming and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths) projects. The goal to equip 21st century young people with 21st century skills.

Studio MPHS opened its door to the children and young people of the McLaren Park and Henderson South community on the 19th of October 2012. Since this time membership has grown at a rapid rate from zero to 171 members in seven months.



## Studio MPHS Statistics to May 2013

- Daily attendance rate averages 21%.
- 81% of members are between the ages of 10 to 13 years.
- 54% male
- 46% female
- 13% of members identify as NZ Maori
- 23% of members identify as NZ European
- 17% identify as Samoan
- 1% Identify as Tongan
- 3% identify as being from Asian decent
- 5% identify as mixed or other.



that are free of bullies and in which a child is safe enough to express him or herself freely.

Accordingly, this research recommends that providers of activities for 9-13 year olds prioritise safety, which includes:

- communicating with parents when their children arrive at an activity;
- communicating with parents when children leave an activity unsupervised (e.g. when they are walking home);
- having an equal ratio of female and male staff and volunteers available at all times;
- ensuring that all staff are police checked, and that this policy is clear to parents;
- paying attention to the balance of gender and ages of young people attending the activity;
- providing information for parents on the adult staff and volunteers involved in the activity, including their photos and information about their background and experience; and
- providing parents with contact details for the activity or programme, particularly for parents who wish to contact adult staff prior to, during or just after a programme session.

## Responsibilities and obligations

Youth providers who work with 9-13 year olds should take into account that many of the children in this community, even those as young as nine or 10 years old, have responsibilities outside of school including homework, church and responsibilities to other family members. Evidence from both parents and children suggests that these responsibilities take priority over activities that the children want to do. Further, parents of 9-13 year olds are more likely to want their children to participate in activities that complement, rather than detract from, education and school work.

This research recommends that providers of activities for 9-13 year olds work with the responsibilities and obligations of 9-13 year olds and the expectations of parents by:

- putting aside time before an activity to complete homework, or ensure that the activity leaves enough time for the child to complete homework afterwards;
- speaking with local school principals and teachers about homework expectations, and how some after-school activities may be structured to help

students fulfil their homework obligations;

- providing parents with written information on the activity e.g. what's involved, the duration of the activity (per session and per term), and the commitment required; and
- communicating with parents as to the educational benefits to their child of participating in the activity

## Actively and meaningfully engaging young people

The realities of the children in this research are shaped by the notion "we live in an adult world," and as such, the capacity of most of these young people to act independently and purposively is somewhat restricted by the adults around them (e.g. parents and teachers). In other words, these children have relatively little agency.

The evidence behind the participation of young people in youth programmes shows that programmes must respond to factors that are important to young people, such as being consulted about decisions, to feel safe, to be challenged, to have an outlet for physical energy, to make and develop friendships, and strong, positive relationships with leaders, mentors and role models.

The young people in this project would like to be treated with respect, to be given responsibility, to be consulted, to be recognised for their special talents and be given opportunities to build positive relationships with significant adults. In doing so, they are asking that adults recognise and respond to their agency and growing independence in a positive, constructive manner.

In addition to having their growing sense of agency recognised and respected, evidence from the literature and this project suggest that young people want to feel as though they are a valued member of their family and community. Some of the young people in this project expressed an interest in contributing to their community, yet were unsure of how they might do this.

Whilst 9-13 year olds may be captured by the idea of an activity, it is the ways in which they are treated, particularly ways which allow them agency, whilst doing that activity that will determine their ongoing attendance and engagement. Accordingly, this research recommends that providers of activities for young people aged 9-13 use the following principles of practice:

- ensure that relationships with the young people are based on respectful interactions. 'Respect' for these young people means being treated "like an adult" and being talked to gently and kindly;

**Watch how the tracks disappear in the distance, it's magical. I can go anywhere on the train.**

*(Photovoice)*



- work on a 'no surprises' basis and consult with the young people around activities and plans;
- work with young people to help them articulate and realise their dreams and aspirations;
- recognise that an approach that works for girls may not work for boys, and vice versa; and
- offer young people opportunities to contribute to their community in meaningful ways.

## Current Gaps

The completion of the Hub West community facility in 2012 and the subsequent establishment of Studio MPHS, a high tech youth studio, has gone some way towards meeting the needs of some 9 - 13 year olds in the MPHS community. There are, however, barriers that may impede actions designed to address these gaps, such as time, cost and parental availability. Nonetheless, gaps still exist, primarily:

- activities that are focussed on skill-acquisition, e.g. cooking, musical instruments;
- sports activities that require specialised equipment, e.g. swimming, gymnastics;
- community-based family activities e.g. those in which the whole family can participate;
- assistance for parents in understanding how to best support their 9 - 13 year olds in the transition from pre-teen to adolescence, particularly school-based transition (e.g. primary to intermediate school, intermediate school to college);
- an equal ratio of female and male community workers and volunteers in current community-based activities; and
- information for parents to help them understand how taking part in community-based activities can impact positively on their children's social and academic competence.

## Future practice needs

Evidence shows that participation in youth programmes can enhance engagement in school and the wider community, and already there is some evidence of this with some of the young people who attend the MPHS High Tech Youth Studio.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, a number of young people aged 9-13 in the MPHS area access community-based sports activities.

It is recommended that MPHS work alongside other community providers e.g. community sports providers, to present the evidence that has emerged from this project, particularly the best practice approaches when working with young people aged 9-13 and how these contribute to positive youth development.

It is further recommended that:

- relationships continue to be built between local schools and community groups, in order to ensure that children who may benefit from participation in these programmes are encouraged to access them; and
- parents in the MPHS community are able to access tools and information with which to better understand how to support their children's education, including the transition from pre-teen through to adolescence;

Lastly, this research recommends that MPHS and schools continue to build on the knowledge and activities which started with this action enquiry in order to ensure that what is provided for 9-13 year olds continues to be responsive to the needs of this age group.

<sup>1</sup> As an example, one of the boys who attends the High Tech Studio (and who took part in this research) has moved from a class for boys with academic challenges in Year 7, to an accelerated learning class in year 8. Both he and his mother attribute this to his Year 7 teacher, and his discovery of animation programmes in the studio, both of which have worked to successfully re-engage him with learning and education.

# Conclusion

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This project has allowed us a unique insight into the needs and aspirations of young people aged 9-13 in the McLaren Park Henderson South Area.

The focus of these young people is typical of their age group and involves participation in activities and recreation that are fun and enjoyable and allow them to increase their skills, show off their talents, and spend time with friends and family.

These activities are more than just a way to fill in time, however. Evidence shows that they are an effective vehicle for the development of autonomy and resilience. In addition, these activities offer young people the opportunity to connect meaningfully with others, enhance their self-efficacy and self-esteem, and increase engagement in school and the wider community. All these are protective factors which can help ease the transition from pre-teen to adolescence.

The most effective ways of engaging young people in the MPHS community is to offer opportunities that allow them to feel competent and increase their confidence. These opportunities are most likely to centre on sports and technology; however they may also include skill-based activities such as cooking, photography, or musical performance. Once they are engaged in an activity, young people want to be treated with respect, spoken to kindly and offered opportunities to meaningfully contribute to their community. We also know that it is important to take parents' perspectives into account.

The work undertaken by the young people involved in this project may be honoured by sharing the information in this report with others and allowing them to understand what they have to offer to the positive development of 9-13 year olds not only in the MPHS community, but also in other communities across New Zealand.

# Appendix 1: Demographics

Note 1: All statistics sourced from the Statistics New Zealand, Census of Population and Dwellings, 2006 unless otherwise stated.

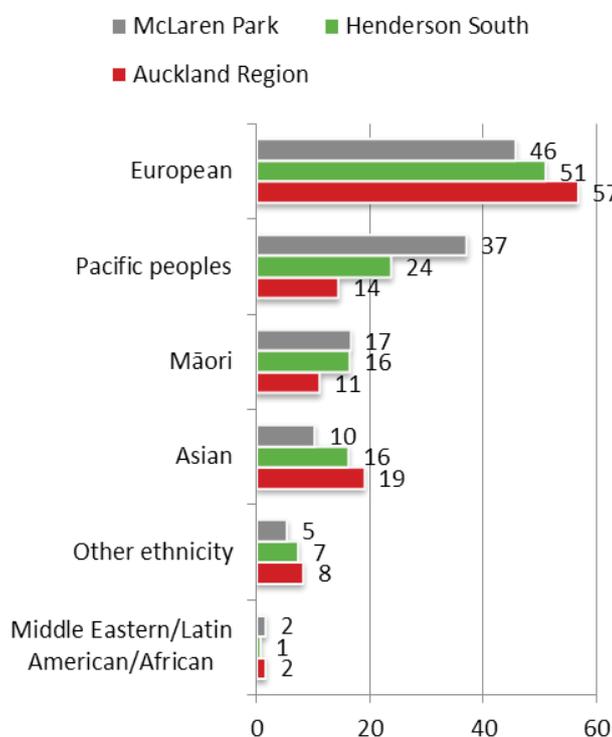
Note 2: Some statistics refer to the local board area Henderson-Massey, which contains the suburbs of McLaren Park and Henderson South.

## Population

- 4,026 people usually live in Henderson South. 2,742 people live in McLaren Park.
- There are 1,389 occupied dwellings in Henderson South and 780 occupied dwellings in McLaren Park.

## Ethnicity

- Henderson South and McLaren Park have a more ethnically diverse population than Auckland as a whole.



- Approximately more than one-third of the population (33.3% Henderson South and 31.7% McLaren Park) were born overseas. The most common birthplace of those born overseas is the Pacific Islands.

## Families

- There are 50 per cent more single-parent households in McLaren Park and Henderson South than their are in Auckland as a whole. (29 per cent Henderson South, 32 per cent McLaren Park, compared with 19 per cent for the Auckland Region).

## Income

- For people aged 15 years and over, the median income (half earn more, and half less, than this amount) is \$21,100 in Henderson South and 23,800 in McLaren Park. This compares with a median of \$26,800 for all of Auckland Region.
- Nearly half (48.2%) of people aged 15 years and over in Henderson South have an annual income of \$20,000 or less. In McLaren Park, one in four residents (43.2%) aged 15 years have an annual income of less than \$20,000 per year.
- Very few residents of Henderson South (11.2%) and McLaren Park (7.9%) earn over \$50,000 per year, compared with 21.6 per cent of people in Auckland Region.

## Education

- Just over one-quarter of people aged 15 years and over in Henderson South (28.2%) and McLaren Park (27.6%) have a post-school qualification, compared with 42.5 percent of people throughout Auckland Region.
- In Henderson South, 32.5 per cent of people aged 15 years and over have no formal qualifications. The numbers are similar in McLaren Park, with over one-third of residents (33.9%) with no formal qualifications, compared with 20.3 per cent for Auckland Region as a whole.

## Employment

- The unemployment rate for people aged 15 years and over in Henderson South (7.9%) and McLaren Park (9%) is higher than the Auckland Region (5.6%).

## Child statistics

- Henderson-Massey has the highest number of children aged between 5-14 of any local board area in Auckland, with an estimated 18,423 children in 2013. This number is projected to grow substantially over the next decade to plateau at around 22,000 in 2021.
- At the 2006 census, 8,101 children aged 10-14 resided in the Henderson-Massey local board area
- 16,811 children aged 0-14 in Henderson-Massey usually watch 2 or more hours of TV a day (almost 60% of child population).<sup>1</sup>
- An estimated 1655 Henderson-Massey children are obese (BMI age appropriate equivalent to 30)<sup>2</sup>

## School

### Stand-downs

Stand-downs are the formal removal of a student from school for a specified period. 2011 figures show that students aged 5-14 in Henderson-Massey were more likely to be stood down from school than their counterparts in the Auckland Region.

- Age 5-9: 3.3/1000 (Auckland region 2.5)
- Age 10-14: 48.3/1000 (Auckland region 33.7)

### Suspension rates

Suspension is a more formal process for more serious matters, and means that students are usually away from school for longer time periods.

- The rate per 1,000 of student population shows Henderson Massey 5-9 year olds as having a slightly higher rate than the Auckland region (0.3 compared with 0.4).
- 10 to 14 year olds are more likely to be suspended than their counterparts in the

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Health. 2008. A Portrait of Health: Key results of the 2006/07 New Zealand Health Survey. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Auckland region (8 per 1,000 students, compared with 6.1 across the Auckland region)

## Exclusion rates

- Age 5-9: 0.1
- Age 10-14: 3.6
- Expulsion rate: 1.2/1000

## Health

Compared to other local board areas in Auckland:

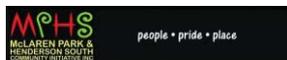
- The percentage of children having breakfast at home every day is relatively high, at 89.5%, while the percentage of children drinking three or more fizzy drinks in the past week is relatively low (15.1%). A comparatively low 4.9% of children had fast food three or more times in the last week.
- Child obesity rates in Henderson-Massey are relatively low, at 5.9%.
- A comparatively moderate 85.5% of Henderson-Massey parents rated their child's health as excellent or very good
- A moderate 58.5% of Henderson-Massey children have never had a filling

## Ambulatory hospitalisation rates:

- Age 05-09 22.5/1000
- Age 10-14 6.1/1000

# Appendix 2: Forms

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## Amplify – Action Enquiry General Information Sheet - Parents

McLaren Park Henderson South Community Initiative Incorporated (MPHS) is a community organisation based in McLaren Park/Henderson South (MPHS) that develops and supports the local MPHS community through research, facilitation, advocacy and community provision.

MPHS are working with Point Research to investigate service provision for young people aged approximately 9 – 13 years. To do this, we will be asking young people living in McLaren Park Henderson South what they like to do and what activities they think young people in their community need.

The information will be used to help develop youth programmes at the new MPHS hub which opens in 2012.

We will also be conducting key informant interviews with key members of our MPHS community. We would like you to participate in one of these interviews. We do not expect the interview to take longer than one hour. The interview will be recorded and transcribed. You may have access to your transcription.

We will be conducting several activities with children and young people in the MPHS area, including a 'SpeakOut' which is a range of fun, interactive activities designed to get children to tell us about their community and what they would like to see, a 'day with a camera' where children and young people take photos of their community for a day (under adult supervision) and intergenerational whānau interviews which will be held with parents and/or children.

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# Amplify Action Enquiry Consent Form (Student Researchers)

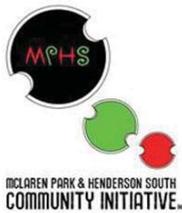
	YES	NO
Jonathan and Nadine have explained what we are doing.	<input type="checkbox"/> 😊	<input type="checkbox"/> ☹️
If I have any questions I can ask Jonathan, Nadine or my teacher, and they will do their best to answer	<input type="checkbox"/> 😊	<input type="checkbox"/> ☹️
Jonathan and Nadine might take notes as part of the research project. If they do, they will not use my name.	<input type="checkbox"/> 😊	<input type="checkbox"/> ☹️
We will be taking photos as part of this research. I give my permission to use photos with me in them (I won't be named).	<input type="checkbox"/> 😊	<input type="checkbox"/> ☹️
I agree to stick to the behaviour expectations that we have decided on together in the first session	<input type="checkbox"/> 😊	<input type="checkbox"/> ☹️
If, for some reason, I don't want to or can't carry on doing this project, I can talk to Jonathan, Nadine or my teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> 😊	<input type="checkbox"/> ☹️
I agree to take part in this project.	<input type="checkbox"/> 😊	<input type="checkbox"/> ☹️

My Name: \_\_\_\_\_ My class \_\_\_\_\_

My Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ My age \_\_\_\_\_

**Don't forget, your parent or caregiver MUST sign the other side of the form as well.**





# Amplify Action Enquiry

## Consent Form (Parents and Caregivers)

Your child is going to be a researcher on a research project called “Amplify Action Enquiry” for the MPHS Community Initiative Inc.

By signing this form, I agree that:

- If I have any questions I can contact the project managers Jonathan or Nadine (details on the information sheet).
- This is a voluntary project. My child may withdraw from this project at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- The researchers may take notes during some activities. My child will not be named in these notes.
- My child may appear in some photographs as part of this project. They will not be named or identified in these photos.
- I agree that my child can take part in this project.

NAME OF PARENT/CAREGIVER: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF CHILD: \_\_\_\_\_

PARENT/CAREGIVER SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

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