



BIG BUDDY MENTORING IMPACT REPORT

Term Three 2025



TERM THREE 2025

Big Buddy Mentoring

First Name	Connections - buddy mentoring
Grace	6 learners at Wainui School
Katie	30 learners at Dairy Flat School
Liz	20 learners at Silverdale School
Noah	20 learners at Dairy Flat School
Simon	11 learners at Ahutoetoe School 15 learners at Orewa Primary 21 learners at Silverdale School 14 learners at Wainui School

We have five youth workers placed in five local primary schools. Their main focus is supporting learners through our Big Buddy small group mentoring programme. In addition they also interact with learners in their breaks, support staff with class activities and join in with school wide activities. In Term Three 137 learners have benefitted from mentoring with one of our team.

We have received amazing feedback from Teachers and senior management at the schools. Average rating for Big Buddy impact on student wellbeing 4.5/5. Staff have commented on noticing improvements in confidence, communication skills, social skills, interpersonal skills, and students feeling more connection & belonging.

Term Three has been a challenging one with reduced funding from nationwide funders and fewer sales at our Op Shops. We have been working hard to reach out to other businesses and community funders in the hope of being able to continue this programme in 2026.



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Learner Feedback

Learners describe in their own words how Big Buddy Mentoring has been good for them this term:

That I get to share things with the SALT team and the other people who do it too.

That I learned to be kind. The we get to play lots of soccer.

I get to learn and spend time with my buddy. I love spending time with them. It makes me feel happy.

That when she comes I get overwhelmed and when I go with her I start calming down because there's not as many people in there as in our class. STAY the way she is!

She is very nice especially when she asks us is there anything happening that she would like us to share. She isn't judgey I about anything.

She is very nice , kind and funny 😊

He is nice and likes playing sports

Learning not to hurt anyone.

To help me be more confident and helping with my problems

If something is wrong she will help me and give me suggestions to fix it 🤔 she is amazing to talk to she is one of the only people I trust to talk to 😊

When I'm in class I don't get angry

I have learned to include others spend more with different people

He helped when time was hard.

You help me get my stress out through playing fun games

I think that salt is helping me with me forgetting about my sister in hospital

It's calming and distracting to play with the kinetic sand and your mind doesn't have to work so hard

I'm less depressed

Getting to relax and reflect on the week while having fun

Makes me feel safe and happier

He is really kind and special

Because I can regulate after all the loud noise at play time

Not having to do school work - having a break from my ADHD.

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Ahutoetoe School

Highlights

- Seeing a number of my groups grow in their compromising skills and becoming aware of others' values and needs.
- Much like last term, connecting with a large variety of students through lunch time sports, namely large games of football.
- Seeing the school (both students and teachers) really come together to support a family that had faced a significant loss.
- Seeing the joy on student's faces when they see that it is time for the SALT Big Buddy time.



Student Story

This term I started mentoring a group of year 2 students. At the beginning of the term they faced some challenges in navigating group dynamics when things got competitive and the majority of them were only keen to meet their own needs. This often left them with moments of frustration at one another.

As the term went by we regularly practiced some encouragement tools and ways to look out for others. By the end of the term I was really impressed to see how the whole group had grown in confidence, self awareness and willingness to look out for others needs, since the beginning of the term.

I look forward to continuing to see them grow as a group and their self confidence.

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Dairy Flat School

Highlights

- Seeing the impact of showing up continuously for students. Sometimes it's hard to see things happening each session but when you take a step back and reflect it's beautiful seeing how far students have come in their confidence, in the way they view themselves, their mannerisms etc.
- A major highlight this term has been feeling a real sense of belonging within the school culture. Being able to join out-of-school days and connect with everyone – from Year 0s to teachers – has been awesome. The staff's proactive and intentional approach to teaching has really inspired me to be more purposeful with each student I work with. It's been encouraging to see how much the school genuinely cares for every child, and it's made me want to reflect that same level of care and intentionality in my mentoring.



Student Story

This term I have seen one student grow and develop some positive friendships in our sessions but also in the playground during breaks. She was struggling with being included and fitting in. She felt like she had no one to play with. Now she is growing in confidence in herself and in her friendships from our sessions and playing with the other girls during breaks. She also mentioned to me that she is controlling her anger better through taking some deep breaths first before yelling at people she is angry at. This is a huge win!!

Student Story

One moment that stood out this term was with a boy who was having a really tough day. He decided not to join his friends and instead asked to spend time with me playing sports outside and chatting about how he was feeling. It was a powerful reminder of the importance of building trust and being a consistent, safe person for the students – sometimes just being present and listening makes the biggest difference.

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Orewa Primary

Highlights

One of my highlights has been playing football with a group of students at morning tea each week and seeing a positive culture of encouragement develop.

Student Story

This term I have had the privilege of seeing one student in particular grow significantly in his confidence in himself, his ability to make friends and work in class.

Earlier in the term he was struggling to make friends due to altercations and also struggling to stay in class. Now he is staying in class, making more friends and feeling much more confident in himself which has been so noticeable in our sessions.

He has even mentioned during our sessions that he has noticed himself getting into less altercations and is feeling stoked about it - how good!

The school's holistic support of this student has played a key role in his growth, and I feel so privileged that I got to play a small part in that. I look forward to continuing to work with this student and witness his continued growth!



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Silverdale School

Highlights

- Witnessing past Big Buddy learners happily functioning well during their school day, confidently interacting with teachers and peers, no longer needing their Big Buddy extra support time.
- Connecting with 10 new learners this term, getting to know them and seeing their confidence grow.
- Seeing a lot of growth in the students' ability to make compromises and seeing the value of valuing others by doing that.
- Receiving positive feedback from both teachers and students about their time in the SALT Big Buddy programme.



Student Story

One of my new learners has a current arrangement with the school to only do half days due to her inability to cope with a full day. After only two SALT Big Buddy sessions, she's now opted to stay on at school over the lunchtime period, in order to have her 'SALT time' during an afternoon block. Her Mum said to me how thrilled she is that her daughter is spending an extra 2 hours at school than usual because of SALT!

Student Story

One of my new learners was clearly having a bad day, as her face and body language indicated when I collected her from class, but she didn't want to talk about it, which is totally fine.

Once in the SALT space she went straight to work on our putty, pulling and squeezing all her frustrations out. Before we were halfway through our session together her mood had lifted enough to join in with the fun physical challenges the other learners and I were doing.

By the end of the session she was laughing and smiling brightly, happy and confident to go back to class again. Watching learner's stress literally melt away before your eyes, because of the safe, fun environment and resources we're able to provide, makes this job so worthwhile and rewarding!

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Silverdale School



Student Story

In one of the groups that I see, two of the students are a bit more vocal than the third about their needs and desires in regards to what they want to do in the SALT session. So we usually end up going along with an activity that the more vocal students choose – with the less vocal student happy to go along whilst also quietly voicing what he wants (after I've asked him a few questions).

In one particular week towards the end of the term, one of the more vocal students began the session by saying "we should let *name of less vocal student* completely choose the activity for today as we often get to do an activity that me or the other student wants to do".

I was so stoked to see how the group culture has developed into a really positive space where they are not only aware of their own needs but looking out for the needs of others too.

In response I encouraged him in his great idea, and the third student was very happy to choose a game, and the two more vocal students listened eagerly to what the third student had to say.

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Wainui School

Highlights

- At the end of the term I had a pair of students write me a thank you note about how much the SALT Big Buddy time had helped them and how much they valued it.
- Being able to meet a need for students that are really struggling by creating a safe space for them to talk, feel heard and valued (this is a highlight every term!).
- The day the students and I played fish bowl, a variation of charades. There was so much shared fun and joy as we played! It was also one of the first sessions with the whole group there which was lovely to be all back together and see the laughter of everyone. It was beautiful to see the students express their creativity with thinking of prompts and the way they acted them out.
- Seeing how well the students integrated one of the group members back in after she had been absent for much of SALT this term. They embraced her and picked things up as they were previously, which helped her to slot right back in as if she hadn't ever been away.

Student Story

A significant moment from this term occurred when a fire alarm went off one day. One of the students was really overwhelmed by the anticipation of what problem might've caused the fire alarm. When the students around noticed, they comforted the girl and were very caring towards her. They helped her to understand that everything will be alright and that the firefighters would be able to solve whatever they may come across. Seeing the way the girls were switched-on to notice the feelings of those around them, and caring for their classmate was truly heartwarming and shows a lot of growth in their social awareness.



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Wainui School

Student Story

In one of the groups of students that I have the privilege of working with each week, the three boys all have different needs and quite different things that they have been going through week to week, however a common denominator of wanting to grow in confidence and needing to have a space in which their voice is heard and valued.

Most weeks, we would play a sport (basketball, football, touch rugby etc), which the boys have learned through the year to consistently make compromises to agree on the chosen activity for the week. However this doesn't mean that each week has gone smoothly – sometimes the students have had their tempers grow/become dis-regulated through the competitiveness of the game but mostly because of something underlying.

As the term/year has progressed it has been awesome to not only see the dis-regulation happen significantly less but to see the group navigate their highs and lows as a team and for them to grow in their abilities to seek to understand one another so that they can have each other's backs when someone is going through something.

It has been really cool to see these boys grow in how they display E Tū Tāngata principles ('You have value, Others matter, We succeed together'). This is a real testament to the success Wainui Primary has had in adopting and implementing E Tū Tāngata principles/language within their school culture over the last year or two.

