



PRIMARY PROJECT BIG BUDDY MENTORING IMPACT REPORT

Term One 2026



TERM ONE 2026

Big Buddy Mentoring

First Name	Connections - buddy mentoring
Jono	21 learners at Dairy Flat School
Liz	22 learners at Dairy Flat School 8 learners at Orewa Primary School 11 learners at Wainui School 12 learners at Silverdale School
Simon	9 learners at Ahutoetoe School 17 learners at Orewa Primary 27 learners at Silverdale School 8 learners at Wainui School

2026 is off to a great start! We have three 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.

This term we have welcomed Jono Read back to the Primary Project Big Buddy Team. Jono has previously worked in this role at Dairy Flat School and is excited to rejoin the Salt team.

Term One has been full of great connections with learners and the wider school community through mentoring and classroom activities, as well as attending camps and school wide activities.

In Term One 135 learners have benefitted from mentoring with one of our team.

TERM ONE 2026

Ahutoetoe School

Highlights

- One highlight for me this term has been seeing a number of my learners receive a 'tohu' at some point (or multiple times) during the term. A tohu being something that is awarded to students for demonstrating school vision/values in how they interact with others and with learning (they get to wear it for the day).
- Another highlight has been seeing most of my students grow in confidence in themselves and in communicating how they are feeling to others.



Student Story

One of the students that I have been seeing this term has been navigating a fair amount of frustration and often lets it out on his classmates. So one of the things we have been working on during our Salt Big Buddy mentoring sessions is what to do when you feel angry.

I was a little unsure about if this student was making progress with that this term, as during our group sessions his default reaction to others actions towards him was retaliation. However, on one of the weeks toward the end of the term he told a story about how earlier that day he had been hurt by another student during lunch – which had left him feeling hurt and frustrated. I was stoked to hear that instead of reacting to the instigator, he was able to go and tell a teacher about what had happened and how he was feeling, thus getting a positive resolution to the incident.



TERM ONE 2026

Dairy Flat School

Highlights

- On the 12th of March, Liz and I went up to Marsden Bay Christian Camp for Dairy Flat's Year 6 Camp. I particularly enjoyed joining in with archery and cage football with (mostly) the boys. I also found it a special opportunity to connect with Yr 6 boys I hadn't yet met and to meet the parents of some of the boys I am mentoring.
- A number of my learners have made positive progress this term including one who has made progress on three goals his teacher has set for him.
- Getting to know both the learners and staff this term, as well as building rapport with the wider community of learners during morning tea breaks.
- One learner got a principal's award at the end of term assembly for following school values which was great to see.
- Attending Dairy Flat's Yr 5 & 6 camp in Marsden Bay with Jono for the day. Once at camp we received such a warm welcome from campers and staff upon our arrival! What a privilege being able to watch and encourage the learners during their camp activities, particularly those we see regularly for Primary Project Big Buddy mentoring. I helped with several activities: archery, zorb soccer, water slide and necklace making. After lunch, at the request of staff, I then supervised the groups practicing their talent show acts for that evening.
- Participating in the 'Junky Monkey' day this term - being invited to see and experience the learner's creativity in all the wonderful things they built during it.
- Helping at the school's Colour Run, what a fun afternoon that brought the wider community together and included so many family members!



TERM ONE 2026

Dairy Flat School

Student Stories

Some of my students have taken a while to engage with the sports we have been playing during our sessions. Over the course of the term, one student has become more willing to engage with sports in our sessions when they are not his preferred sport. He also seems to bounce back from disappointments more quickly. Another student has learnt that he is physically stronger/more robust than he thinks he is and is building resilience in this way.

One learner shared how upset she was at not being allowed to see or stay at her Dad's for the next month, while he's healing from an operation at home. We came up with a plan to create pictures and a get well card for him instead, which an adult could then pass on to him for her. This empowered her, by giving her a way to still communicate with him, changing her negative outlook on the situation into a positive one. The difference to her whole demeanour was so rewarding to see!

One week, a learner was having a particularly bad day and had opted to sit by herself outside the staffroom during morning tea, thinking she'd burnt all her friendship bridges and had no one to play with. So I invited and encouraged her to come join us on the playground instead. By the end of the break she was smiling again, engaging with her peers and interacting with the playground equipment. Sometimes all it takes to turn your day/situation around, is to be noticed and included!

Another learner was feeling really down and not in a good space emotionally, as she had been moved yet again to a different foster family, this time on her actual birthday. So during our session together I made a point of making her feel connected and an important part of our group (which she is!). Then we played some group games to give her something to smile about, which worked! She was laughing and smiling all the way back to class. I hoped she was able to carry that lightness through the rest of her day and week. What a privilege being able to shine some light into someone's otherwise gloomy day!



TERM ONE 2026

Orewa Primary

Highlights

- The warm welcome and excellent communication I receive from this school each week, thank you everyone - particularly Lisa Davies!
- Attending the school's Colour Run - what a great community turnout, including the local firefighters with their truck and hose!
- One of my highlights was attending the school's Colour Run. It was awesome to see such a great community turnout, and so much joy on all the students' faces.
- Another highlight was seeing a number of the students learn how to communicate how they are feeling and how that has had a positive impact on them.
- Being invited to connect with a handful of school mums, Lisa Davies, and principal Claire Janes in the staffroom during a monthly planned coffee get together.

Student Story

Making myself available to all learners during break times brings a multitude of opportunities to connect with and help others. It's rewarding how learners, who aren't on my list, are now identifying me as a safe person to come up to and ask for help or guidance from.

Student story

One learner openly shares her struggles with me in our sessions, demonstrating the level of trust she feels and has developed



TERM ONE 2026

Orewa Primary

Student Story

During the colour run day I sat under the gazebo with the various year groups of learners. They had to wait for their year group's turn to run, so it was a particularly long wait for the youngest ones. My presence was a welcome distraction and opportunity for them to sit, connect and practise their conversational skills with me.

Student Story

This term I have been using a set of imagery cards (called "More Than Words" cards) as a tool for students to reflect on their week and how they are feeling. This has proved to be a great success, especially for the younger groups.

It has been super cool to see them pick cards that represent how they are feeling and to see them grow in their ability to identify what their feelings/emotions are. For example, on one of the weeks a student picked an image of a hammer to describe how he was feeling. His reason for picking that card was because he loves to build others up and felt like he had been doing that lots during the past week.

Student Story

It has also been great to see the growth in teamwork/leadership skills of a couple of the groups. Throughout the term it has been cool to see the students grow in confidence to lead with patience and to encourage one another when given the space to do so.



TERM ONE 2026

Silverdale School

Highlights

- One of the highlights for me this term has been having a new room to use as an indoor space for Salt Big Buddy Mentoring sessions for the year.
- Another highlight was being able to attend some of the year 5/6 athletics day, being able to see the positive school spirit, and students getting joy from competing and giving things a go.
- Attending the school's Cultural Day on the 19th March and being amazed at the wonderful array of cultures being represented through so many fantastic traditional costumes and outfits worn by both staff and the learners. Then being invited to join in on Room 21's cultural shared morning tea. There were dishes I'd never seen or heard of before, which were all very delicious. It was heartwarming to witness the children's delight when eagerly sharing their personal dishes with me and experiencing my positive reactions when trying their food.
- Visiting and helping the Year 6 campers for the day at YMCA lodge in Shakespeare Park, with Archery, Rock Climbing, and team building games - despite the wet weather!



TERM ONE 2026

Silverdale School

Student Stories

In one of the students in particular, I got to see a real growth in teamwork, self control and overall positivity since seeing him last year. This student changed classes at the beginning of this year which has helped set him up for a really good year so far. Last year this student struggled to encourage others and identify his own needs while feeling frustrated. However, this year during our Salt big buddy mentoring sessions it has been really cool to see him learn to encourage others, laugh more, feel big emotions without letting the emotions control him, and communicate his needs while listening to the needs of others in the groups. I am really encouraged by the progress this student is making and by his growing self confidence, and look forward to continuing to see that growth next term.

Camp gave me an insight into one particular learner I see - she excelled at rock climbing but was particularly disappointed when archery didn't go her way. This provided a learning opportunity for us to discuss how our achievements don't reflect our value as a person. This concept seemed to provide a lightbulb moment for her during our conversation, she hugged and thanked me and was then able to go on enjoying the rest of camp, whether she was good at something or not!

I was with a group of young learners, one whom I started seeing last year due to her extreme lack of confidence. We were on our way to our Salt session, when we saw her teacher from last year in the distance. This learner ran confidently up to her and proudly showed off the cultural outfit she was wearing, describing in detail what each item of clothing was. This teacher was so blown away and delighted at how much this learner's confidence and verbal skills had grown, she praised the Salt sessions for growing this confidence in her, so much so that she said she was like a completely different child!

A learner I've built a rapport with over the years rushed to find me during break time to report a problem he'd seen. Two learners had buried scissors and sharpened sticks upright inside sandcastles, waiting for a particular child who loves to destroy them, to come and jump on them. Thankfully tragedy was avoided!! Needless to say I was able to sit down and speak with the learners as to how incredibly dangerous this was, that it must never happen again, and why I must now report this to their teacher (which I then went to the staffroom and did). I couldn't have been more proud of the learner who recognised the danger and rushed to get help.



TERM ONE 2026

Wainui School

Highlights

- One of the highlights for me this term was being able to witness a number of the students learning how to have positive dialogue during disagreements, so that they can better understand where the other person is coming from.
- Another highlight was seeing how inclusive the groups were. The groups changed a bit from last year with a few new students joining the Salt Big Buddy mentoring programme, however the groups were adaptable to the change and very welcoming and inclusive of the new students joining the group.
- Getting to know the learners on my list and developing deeper connections.
- Spending a day out at Waipu Caves Farm Park with the Year 7 & 8 campers. Seeing one of my groups work exceptionally well together on teamwork activities. Marvelling at their resilience in making the most of every activity despite the wet weather. Experiencing the best glow worm caves together!



TERM ONE 2026

Wainui School

Student Story

One of the groups has quite varying dynamics and needs so isn't always easy for this group to get along, however they have been great at working at this and learning to grow as a team/group.

On one of the weeks, two out of the three students in the group wanted to do an outdoor activity while the other wanted to do an indoor one. This opened up a great opportunity for them to learn to negotiate their needs. This took some practice but eventually it was agreed upon that the third student could bring what they wanted to do indoors, into the outdoor space, so that they could all get their needs met simultaneously while also being in the same space as one another.

I have loved seeing their progress and look forward to continuing to see them grow in their compromising and 'need negotiating' skills with one another and with classmates.

Student Story

Navigating friendship disagreements can be difficult, particularly when big emotions are triggered. One group had a falling out over the sleeping arrangements for the upcoming camp, due to one learner controlling who sleeps in what cabin. This had divided the group and communication had broken down. I spoke about the importance of being kind and including others and made time for each of the girls involved to share their perspective on the situation. I encouraged them to continue to talk kindly to one another about it until they could reach an agreement. By the time camp came, they'd managed to sort it out between themselves and were all happily staying in the same cabin together! Making space to keep lines of communication open is an important way to help resolve issues.

