

Grace Gane Memorial Award Lecture *presented by* **Professor Gail Gillon**

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Aspiring to a literate world for all



Abstract:

Literacy is a powerful enabler of positive education, health and life outcomes, particularly in our technologically enhanced world. Yet many young children with speech and language challenges continue to be at high risk for persistent literacy difficulties. Recent analysis of literacy growth trajectories for these children highlight an urgent need to provide proactive support to enhance more positive learning outcomes.

In this Grace Gane Memorial lecture, the conference theme of *Aoraki Iho Ake* will be reflected through a discussion of the advancement of children's literacy skills within strengths based and culturally responsive frameworks. A strengths-based perspective focuses on the learning conditions, teaching practices, family and community supports that lead to successful outcomes. The perspective positively recognizes a person's effort and emerging capabilities and strengths. A culturally responsive perspective values and respects an individual's cultural identity and background and recognises the importance of a person's well-being within the context of their whānau and community.

Recent research findings from New Zealand's *Better Start National Science Challenge* will be discussed as an example of using strengths based and culturally responsive frameworks to accelerate literacy learning for all children. The critical importance of speech-language therapists connecting with teachers, literacy specialists and other health professionals to advance children's early literacy success and healthy well-being will be highlighted.