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Summit 2023  
9-11 October

Melbourne, Australia & Online



Behavioural and Implementation  
Science Interventions  
Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine



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## #32 - Scaling up ENGAGE – a case study on context, implementation and the role of intermediaries.

### Presenting Author(s)\*

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MMS, Dunedin

### Country of residence

New Zealand

### Objectives/aims

ENGAGE is an evidence-based approach that supports pre-school children to develop self-regulation skills through intentional play and language strategies.

ENGAGE has been delivered to 330 early childhood education (ECE) services in New Zealand since 2021, and the New Zealand Government is investing \$19.7m to expand ENGAGE to an additional 1,830 ECEs over the next four years.

The presentation will provide a real-world case study on the methods used to successfully scale ENGAGE to-date, including the importance of context when implementing evidence in diverse settings and the role of intermediaries to facilitate multidisciplinary partnerships to achieve positive impacts at scale.

### Methods

ENGAGE was developed by Assoc Prof Dione Healey (University of Otago) and is implemented in ECE services, primary schools and community settings in New Zealand by MMS.

MMS and Assoc Prof Healey have partnered since 2016 to adapt ENGAGE from a parent-to-child intervention to a curriculum-aligned, group-based approach for a diverse cohort of ECE teachers at large scale. MMS has strategically targeted investment from the New Zealand Government to support large scale delivery and long-term sustainment across the ECE sector – and the adaptation and scaling of ENGAGE to-date has been achieved via a combination of rapid iteration prototypes, open trials, RCTs and scale-up pilots (funded by a variety of philanthropic and government funders).

MMS has led the scaling-up of ENGAGE via an intermediary role – and is responsible for developing relationships and facilitating multidisciplinary partnerships

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between subject matter experts, implementers, ECE teachers, cultural advisors, philanthropic funders, politicians and public service officials.

ENGAGE is implemented via a train-the-teacher approach – where ENGAGE facilitators with experience of the ECE sector and strong connections to local communities deliver interactive workshops to teachers, and provide ongoing support / coaching visits that are responsive to the needs and preferences of each ECE. Refresher sessions and maintenance support are also provided to ECEs as required, to account for high rates of teacher turnover in New Zealand's ECE sector, and support the long-term sustainment of ENGAGE techniques.

### Main findings

In previous trials with parents and teachers in New Zealand ENGAGE has demonstrated positive effects on children's self-regulation skills, including significant reductions in hyperactivity, aggression and attention problems. Examples include:

- Parent-led delivery – an RCT comparing parent-based delivery of ENGAGE with the Triple P programme (<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-019-40234-0>)
- Teacher-led delivery – an open trial with 28 ECEs examining the effects of implementation in the ECE setting (<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-022-25655-8>)

In 2021/22 New Zealand's Ministry of Education funded a 12-month scale-up pilot to test the suitability of ENGAGE for further scaling across the ECE sector. ENGAGE was delivered to 150 ECEs in three regions in New Zealand and was found to be well-suited to further scaling, due to the ecological validity of the intervention design and the responsiveness of the implementation approach to the diverse and dynamic elements of the ECE sector.

ENGAGE is also being implemented in the Kia Tīmata Pai RCT – which aims to evaluate the effects of oral language and self-regulation interventions delivered to 140 ECEs over a 4.5 year period

(<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2022.10.18.22281232v1>)