

TAITA COLLEGE — WHERE CULTURE COUNTS

THE POWER OF AUTHENTIC LEARNING

Research tells us when students believe in themselves, their identity, heritage and culture they are far more likely to be confident, capable and successful citizens in their community, says Taita College Principal Karen Morgan.

“In order to enable students to be the best the best that they can be, we must acknowledge there are diverse world views, knowledges and different approaches to learning that can facilitate powerful outcomes. At Taita College we do all we can to embrace and celebrate diversity and emphasise the importance of values, respect and collaboration.

Karen Morgan says one of the most wonderful things about Taita is the incredible richness and diversity of cultures within the school and community.

“In the college our focus is to offer culturally responsive practices, which means relationships are key, along with fostering learning opportunities that offer a holistic approach to success. Curriculum is everything we do in a school, and for us learning authentically through activities outside of the classroom, is a powerful conduit to facilitate active lifelong learners.”

Most recently a large number of Taita College students from its Poly Group were involved in preparing for the Tu Tangata Festival held in Wellington at the Michael Fowler Centre.

“As the only co-educational secondary school invited to be a part of this wonderful celebration it was an absolute privilege for our students to shine, experience success, and be a part of a forum where culture counted,” says Karen Morgan. “For our senior students involved, they were able to gain NCEA credits through the cultural dance assessments offered. Not only did our students gain academically, but they also embraced the true meaning of whanaungatanga (Aiga – family), and epitomised our mantra “we are one heart, one beat.”

Taita College student leaders say “we get to learn about our own culture and everyone else’s culture – gaining a respect and



appreciation for our differences. Being in Poly Group has made us want to promote and do more cultural activities in our school and community. It is a truly memorable experience to be part of this group, and connect to others through our cultures. It makes us feel we are valued and gives us a real sense of belonging.”

The Taita College Poly Group is led by Rose Tuita'alili-Moreli, along with the student leaders for 2017 Tara Kerr, Tau Timu, and Bronwyn Kumeroa-Bell. The student leaders act in a tuakana teina role, and guide, mentor and support all students involved.

“The poly group demonstrated throughout the process the importance of relationships, kotahitanga (unity), manaakitanga (support), and connected with their families, culture, and demonstrated deep understanding of values,” says Karen Morgan. “The students exhibit lifelong learning capabilities such as planning, organisation, leadership, commitment, memorisation, collaboration, active participation and focus.

“At Taita College we are making the most out of our learning programmes and know the power of offering an inclusive curriculum where culture counts. Success for all students means we have to move away from our traditional homogenous models of the past, and explore new and exciting programmes to enable every student to reach their potential and be the best that they can be!”

Titiro whakarunga ki nga puke – Look up towards the hills.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY David Brownlie