

TAITA COLLEGE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

THE POWER OF COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP



“At Taita College we have just established a new vision, and part of that vision emphasises the importance of offering meaningful curriculum that meets the needs of our students. In order to allow our students to be the best they can be, we are working hard to offer dynamic learning programmes, and ensure student centred learning is a priority. This programme demonstrates the power of collaboration and partnership, and encompasses an integrated approach to learning where student voice and leadership is at the forefront.” says Principal Karen Morgan

When 95 per cent of our young people state they either “like” sport or “like it a lot” it is virtually a no brainer to directly link it with education, says Taita College’s Head of Physical Education, Alissa Murdoch.

Based on responses from over 17,000 students, she believes this result from a 2011 Survey of Young People by Sport New Zealand is part of the most significant piece of research into young New Zealanders’ participation in recreation in more than a decade.

Getting young people learning “in” and “through” sport is exactly what the Sport in Education (SiE) project has been doing in pilot schools across the country over the past three years. The students experience and develop attitudes and skills such as resilience, perseverance, self-discipline, teamwork and leadership, which are transferable to achieving success in all aspects of life – including the classroom.

In 2016, Taita College was invited to become part of this project – its inclusion initiated by Alissa Murdoch after being awarded a Peter Sharp Scholarship from the New Zealand Secondary School Sports Council and researching ways to engage students.

The SiE results, she discovered, were quite “phenomenal – no matter where it was implemented in the pilot schools or at whatever level, through this project students were engaged in their school, class and



Taita College Principal Karen Morgan (right) discusses the Sport in Education programme with her Head of Physical Education Alissa Murdoch.

learning and we know engagement precedes achievement”.

Together with the Year 9 teachers, she spent 2016 building the foundations of their own Sport in Education platform.

“Class teachers were asked to think and deliver differently, putting sport and active learning at the forefront of their teaching. Students were encouraged to be more physically active in their learning across all subjects not just PE. This was supported by an increasing body of international and New Zealand research confirming increased physical activity enhances cognitive function

improving memory, behaviour, concentration and academic achievement,” she explains.

“It’s heartening to have affirmed what you’ve always known to be the case: that physical activity enhances learning and increases academic outcomes.”

SUPPORT FROM LOWER HUTT CITY COUNCIL

Taita College acknowledges the “considerable support” of a partnership with Lower Hutt City Council’s (LHCC), North East Pathways Project in this endeavour.

Led by LHCC and funded largely by Sport NZ, NEPP operates out of Avalon Intermediate School. Its aim is to use sport and recreation to better engage students and the community in school activities and academic and physical achievement. Already the results are stunning.

In 2016, Taita College took one Year 9 class and began integrating their five core subjects (English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and PE.) The school emphasises: Sport in Education is not about putting more “sport” into all the other curriculum areas, it’s about using sport, the values of sport and active education as both a vehicle and context to engage students. Instead of learning about energy transformation in Science via diagrams of circuits, 9SiE looked into the significance of nutrition in professional sports people and how athletes utilise and transform

energy to maximise performance – in an integrated unit during the Rio Olympics. This year another SiE class is added at Year 9 while continuing with the original group at Year 10.

“It’s not about teaching more ‘sporty’ content, but rather engaging learners in things they enjoy and of which they have prior knowledge and learning.”

“Essentially it’s about bringing together winning ingredients to form an incredible formula for success. A dedicated team of teachers in this project, relationship with Avalon Intermediate and the support from North East Pathways Project, and fabulous students. **When we work together, we achieve together.**” says Principal Karen Morgan.

The 9SiE team also participated in a range of exciting EOTC experiences and leadership opportunities over the past school year. Acting as ambassadors for Sport in Education during Open days and evenings, speakers at community sport clubs, officials for sports tournaments at contributing schools and possibly the highlight of the year, The two day “Big Deal” excursion. This summated an integrated Obesity and Diabetes unit where students got the opportunity to plan two days out of school looking at healthy lifestyle options and activities young people could access in the community. This included healthy eating where they shopped (online first to ascertain value for money) then prepared and shared the meals. They had a combat session at Les Mills Hutt City, swam at Stokes Valley pool, got active at Maidstone Max Park, and completed an Amazing Race that led them to Frank Kitts Park in Wellington where they indoor climbed then kayaked out in the lagoon.



From left to right: William Bower, Margaret Hopoi and Dianna Revell get ready to kayak on Wellington Harbour during the Amazing Race. Despite his youthfulness, William is currently the Student Representative on the Board of Trustees.



Whakawhanaungatanga: SiE is all about collaboration and teachers and students all working together.

These activities were selected and planned by the students using the “Design Thinking” process to show other young people in the region the type of healthy lifestyle options that exist.

“As educational leaders we have to be open to offering a diverse curriculum that is engaging, that promotes active learning, and one that ultimately makes a difference for our learners. This programme highlights the success associated with offering an authentic curriculum, where learning in context encourages excellent student outcomes. I feel very privileged to be working alongside such talented staff and students at Taita College – we are well on the way to making our new vision a reality!” Karen Morgan.

See the school in action on YouTube: <https://youtube/JZe41GbONtk>