



Principal Karen Morgan.

TAITA COLLEGE

INQUIRY BASED STEM PROJECTS

We are getting knee deep into our learning – Gumboots and all!

Learning at Taita College is so exciting! Gone are the days we all once knew, where in school we often just sat and listened while the teacher talked to us from the front of the class. With the implementation of our new Year 9 curriculum, our students are getting to experience some amazing opportunities. Not only do they learn the essential skills they need in order to progress in each subject discipline, they also get to participate in inquiry and project based learning that is fun, meaningful and engaging.

In our junior programme we are working towards an integrated approach to learning through inquiry. We are moving away from subject silos, and have adopted a thematic approach, as a means to foster our culturally responsive and holistic pedagogy. Our teaching staff are working collaboratively to offer incredible projects to connect our students to their learning. Part of our ethos as well, is to offer our students the chance to learn outside of the classroom (EOTC), and to date our Year 9 students have all; trained into Wellington, visited Te Papa, gone to the top of Mount Victoria to see the landmarks of our area, had gelato on Oriental Parade, and visited both Weta workshop and the Carter Observatory.

Success is absolutely about academic achievement,

but from a culturally responsive perspective it is about so much more. To have many plentiful and rich experiences, not only develops key competencies but life skills that are critical for positive outcomes for all students. As part of our project based learning, we are measuring aspects from the front end of the curriculum, things such as thinking, managing self, teamwork, communication, problem solving, responsibility, decision making, leadership, relating to others and participating and contributing. We know these are the skills our businesses require of our students once they go into the workforce or further education – so it is our job to do all we can to best prepare them to be in the best position to reach their potential both now and in the future. We not only involve our staff and students, but also our families in assessing the key competencies, so there is a collective approach from all stakeholders to see and acknowledge improvement.

This term our theme is sustainability, and whilst we have a few projects on offer for our students, one of our main science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) focused projects, is to rejuvenate our wetlands 'swamp' at the back of our school. Yes that's right, our students will be putting on their gumboots, and getting 'stuck in knee deep' to clean up the area and to then re-plant new shrubs, trees and harakeke. Students will be ensuring waterways are clean, tracking

any animal or bird species in the area, and will learn what it takes to sustain a wetlands area by knowing all of the eco systems that co-exist. Learning will be hands on, real and will make sense for our students.

What has been an additional bonus for us, is the fact this year we were awarded a **Teacher Led Innovation Fund of \$110 thousand from the Ministry of Education**, which will be used to support our wetlands 'swamp' project. This means we now have the capacity to work with a number of different groups, as collaboration and linking with our local expertise and resources is a priority. We feel very privileged to have so many organisations and people contributing to our students' learning such as: EnQuiring Minds, Malaghan Institute, McDiarmid, GNS, The Learning Connexion, Zealandia, Environ School, Victoria University, Marine Science experts, Kaumatua, and Mountain and Seas. We are also extending the offer of involvement in the wetlands project to our feeder schools Avalon Intermediate and Koraunui. Our students will be acting in a tuakana teina role to help promote project based learning with the Year 8 students in a tangible manner that is understood and accessible. Relationships for us are the key to success, as when we work together, we achieve together.

For us at Taita College collaborative project based learning is the way of the future – where students work together and alongside those with expertise in their community. Given that this year we obtained our best Level 3 NCEA results, (well above the national average), we know we are getting things right! It is a really exciting time to be at school and to be in such a positive environment to be enriched and immersed in purposeful learning.

We put our students first, believe in student voice, and do all we can to offer a robust programme that is second to none. Our vision whakatauki is to aim high for what is truly valuable, and to never let any obstacles stop you from reaching your goals – to be the very best you can be. We aspire to do this everyday.

It takes a village to raise a child, and we are certainly working as a committed community should be working together – go team Taita!

Ngā mihi
Karen Morgan
Principal Taita College



Taita College Yr 9 students measuring water quality, especially the clarity. From left: Ahoia Fotofili, Poppy Sowry, Nicolas Denison.