Leadership for Academic success

Southern Cross Campus (TLIF 1-086)

For the Ministry of Education
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Project title:
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Education Counts:
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Summary

This project was designed for Year 9 and 10 Pasifika and Māori students at Southern Cross Campus, in Mangere East. The ethnic composition of the students attending this school is 32% (480) Samoan, 28% (420) Tongan, 16% Māori (225), and 13% (195) Cook Islands Māori.

This project began with an outdoor education camp focused around Spoken Word Poetry. This project was seen as having the potential to accelerate achievement outcomes in literacy for priority learners. The purpose of the inquiry was to determine if engaging students in outdoor education would develop their leadership skills, and if Spoken Word experiences would lift engagement and achievement in poetry.

Inquiry Team

Project Team: Belinda Gribbin (HoD English) and Paula Gillon (English Teacher) Southern Cross Campus

External experts: Kokako Lodge Outdoor Education team; Dietrich Soaski (Spoken word Poetry) Cynthia Orr (Team Solutions)

Background

The project was built on a successful trial held in 2014 by three Achievement in Multi-Cultural High Schools (AIMHI) schools at Kokako Lodge. The team wondered if intensive immersion in spoken word experiences combined with team-building and outdoor education would build a community of learning among teachers and students that would be a springboard for further literacy teaching and learning at school.

The inquiry

A summary of what the team did:

- Participating students engaged in the three-day camp programme which comprised five sessions of poetry writing, and outdoor activities including archery, orienteering, abseiling, and team building skills. After the camp the teachers included the approaches to teaching poetry that were used by the poetry expert.
This included using the vocabulary that was taught in the camp lessons. They also included more collaborative ways of working alongside their students.

- Students were surveyed before and after the camp in relation to their views of their confidence in writing and leadership skills. Parents also completed a survey at the post camp debrief about their views about changes in students’ confidence, writing, presentation and leadership skills.
- Students were invited to submit their Spoken Word Poem written at camp for their speech assessment.

**Key findings**

- There was a large shift in the distribution of assessment grades for those for whom pre-post data was available. For example in one class, 55% gained an “achieved” grade for their poetry assessment before the camp, compared with 72% after the camp. The percentage of those who achieved with merit almost doubled.
- Students’ confidence in class increased. They were more confident asking questions and in sharing their ideas.
- Students demonstrated more respect towards one another. This resulted in very positive classroom learning environments.
- Leadership skills developed during the camp were utilised within the classroom.
- There were clear shifts in student perceptions of their confidence in presenting their writing to an audience. Before the camp just over half of the students indicated that they were confident, compared with 70% after the camp.
- More students reported that they enjoyed writing.
- Teachers used Spoken Word Poetry as a trigger for other English assessments e.g. Static Image and Formal Writing.
- The team was not successful in engaging parents/whānau in learning about the camp and their children’s experiences.
Key implications

- An intensive off-campus learning experience for students can help to develop positive attitudes towards learning and towards each other.
- When teachers work with a specialist pedagogical expert alongside their students they build common knowledge that they can continue to build on within their classroom programmes.
- It is important to explicitly plan classroom pedagogy so that teachers are able to implement new approaches in their day-to-day teaching.
- The team learnt that they need to work differently with the parents/whānau of their students to engage them in their children’s accomplishments.

Plans for sharing the findings

The team planned to share the what they learnt, particularly the impact of using an off-campus environment and specialist support, to improve student learning outcomes with other schools in their surrounding area.

For further information

If you would like to learn more about this project please contact the project leader at: bgibbon@southerncross.school.nz
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