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# Upper Hutt Primary School Case Studies 2011



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## Purpose and Overview:

Below are two case studies from Primary Schools in the Upper Hutt Area. They detail a range of physical activity, physical education and health based initiatives implemented at the two schools. These can be used as examples for what schools can do in these two vital areas. Please note that this is not an exhaustive or even extensive list of the possibilities that can be undertaken in the school environment, however these are two, highly proactive schools doing some wonderful work for their communities.

Plateau School is a semi rural primary school 6km north of Upper Hutt. As a schooling community they are actively involved in environmental initiatives and hold a silver Enviroschools award. Currently they are a decile nine school with approximately 150 students.

Totara Park School is located close to the Hutt River in Totara Park. It backs onto Awakairangi Park and through their school initiatives they try to make use of these natural facilities. They emphasise to students and wider school families the benefits of physical exercise and a healthy lifestyle. Currently they are a decile eight school with approximately 250 students.

Activation, the community recreation branch of the Upper Hutt City Council has developed these case studies as a school resource. Activation has had a large part to play in supporting these schools to achieve the amazing results detailed below. Whole school cultures have been radically changed and students, parents and staff appear motivated and fully engaged in the areas of health, physical activity and wellbeing. Activation have had a lead role in many of the wider programmes utilised by these schools such as GATE, HEHA, UVPSSA, Active Transport and many more.



# Plateau School

## PAL's Programme

The Physical Activity Leaders' programme is a Sport Wellington initiative and part of the Active Schools programme. Sport Wellington staff spend time developing and training teachers to assist in setting up PAL's programme's in their own schools. Two enthusiastic teachers from Plateau School attended the two day PAL's training. The teacher's carefully select several Year 5 and 6 students to become the Physical Activity Leaders in their school. The students are also given training to develop their leadership skills. They become role models, planning and implementing physical activity sessions utilising PAL's. At Plateau School the PAL's programme is run twice a week. A group of students organise two activities of their choice, one for senior students and the other for the junior department.



The costs for this project were minimal. This included relief teacher coverage during the training phase, and the purchase of hats to identify PAL's students at lunch time. The teachers at Plateau school have observed that bad playground behaviour decreases during lunchtimes when the PAL's programme is running. "It's all very student driven. We just facilitate the kids, they have the skills," remarked Brid O'Keeffe, a teacher involved in the project. "The students were given the training and a handbook then it was all up to them. The PAL's decided which games the students like the best, they get out the gear and set up the game. They ensure that the game runs smoothly and then reflect on each day's session in a scrapbook."



The students appear to enjoy being PAL's. When asked what the best thing is about being a Physical Activity Leader they responded, "It's nice to teach littler kids new games." "The others really listen to you and its just fun." "Best thing about PAL's is playing the games when it's not your turn to run it."

## Enviroschools

Plateau school has a focus on sustainability projects and making their school environmentally friendly. They have received both Bronze and Silver Enviroschools award for their effective efforts towards these noteworthy themes. Principal Nigel Frater says, "Sustainability and caring for the environment is a passion for the school".

Plateau school has carried out multiple projects with Enviroschools and the Healthy Eating Healthy Action programme. The students are taught about sustainability and are able to directly see and take part in the contribution their school is making. The initiatives range from renewable energy sources to recycling and organic eating habits. Thirty enthusiastic Plateau School students make up the Enviroschools group. They meet once a week and they present the current Enviroschools projects at the school assemblies.

**Initiative 1:** Through Genesis Energy, solar panels have been installed onto the roof of a class room and data is recorded every half hour onto the Schoolgen website. The total energy generated thus far across the country for the Schoolgen programme is 199,693 kWh which is converted to a total of 38.66 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> saved over the last two years. The students learn that the solar energy is renewable unlike gas, coal or oil.

**Initiative 2:** Through Meridian Energy the school secured \$10,000 to put towards clearing the bank behind their school and replanting it with New Zealand native trees. A walking track has been created in the hill behind the school and classes get the opportunity to go for walks to the lookout. They have also placed weta motels near the walking track. The learning outcomes from this particular project include understanding of how the forest regenerates and how to protect New Zealand's unique flora and fauna.

**Initiative 3:** Plateau school has a composting system to recycle most of their organic waste. They have buckets in the classrooms rather than using full sized bins to ensure the students sort between paper, food scraps and landfill waste. From here, the classroom waste is distributed to the correct area; rubbish, worm bins, compost or a paper recycling bin which the school funds. Principal, Nigel Frater has invested in this process and indicates from his perspective, "There is no point doing our recycling in classes if it all goes in the same bin out here, so we do end up paying a little bit extra for the paper recycling system, but we see that as part of our contribution to the environment."



**Initiative 4:** Each class has been allocated their own garden plot which has been provided via a grant from the Healthy Eating Healthy Action (HEHA) programme. These gardens are maintained by students and contain vegetables, flowers and herbs. Through this project the students learn what plants need to grow and the benefits of self sufficient food sources.

**Initiative 5:** The students are taught that water is the healthiest option to drink. A second part of the HEHA project allowed the school to replace the 40 year old fountains with new push button fountains. This reduces water wastage and the modern design allows students to fill up their drink bottles from the fountain.



## Active Transport

Plateau School took on the challenge of reshaping the travel habits of its students and their families. The first step was to start a travel plan committee consisting of staff and parents that supported the project. The committee had no shortage of ideas to work with including transforming the school entrance walkway, spot prize incentives, walking buses and themed days of the week. Activation, Upper Hutt City Council and Greater Wellington Regional Council came on board right from the outset, providing an abundance of support and resources for the school.

Transformation of the schools main entrance way is a reflection of the huge emphasis put on changing the school community travel habits. The entrance way is designed to encourage families to walk and bike into the school with a safe, separate walkway from the driveway. Wooden seats are nestled between the plants inviting parents to sit and wait for their children before walking them home. Spot prizes were used as an incentive for those who used a form of active transport to get to school, "We would stand at the gate and give out spot prizes to every tenth child, or a child that we knew that had not got one before. They would be prizes like stickers or little toys, the kids were always eager to see if they won a prize." remarked Sheryl Homer, the lead teacher involved in this project. Graduated rewards is one way to encourage behaviour change. The reward instigates this change and once behaviour becomes habit, the rewards can be reduced and hopefully this behaviour remains. Another initiative was to organise a walking bus for students who were close enough to walk to school. At first this proved difficult due to the location of the school being semi-rural, however they overcame this problem by having students dropped off at specific points along the route to join the walking bus.

Themed days such as Wheeling Wednesdays and Fancy Feet Fridays get the students excited and happy to participate and the school also takes part in many regional initiatives such as Movin' March. They also ran a competition for a slogan to promote the project. The winning slogan will be painted on a new mural by the walking friendly entrance way. The winning slogan was "Walking feet are good for the heartbeat". The key for the project Mike Mercer, Schools Activator says, is to, "Make it fun for the kids so their interest is sparked and good habits are developed in a positive way." Next year Plateau School are planning to make the programme even bigger and some ideas have already begun such as painting feet on Plateau Road so students know where it is safe to cross. Sheryl said, "It wasn't hard to make this programme work in our school, as we had the necessary support from the community. Hopefully in future years we will continue to see the same level of positive change that we have experienced thus far in the project."



## Whanau Groups

Students at Plateau School are split into three Whanau groups and sessions within these groups are held weekly, sometimes focus on sporting activities but also on other projects such as sustainability studies. This has many benefits and contributes to the 'family like' atmosphere of the school. It is a good medium for the students to get to know each other and learn to work together, especially as this exercise encourages a variety of ages to spend time together.

## UVPSSA

Plateau School is part of the Upper Valley Primary School Sports Association. They participate in most of the inter-school events and have been involved in the organisation of one event per year on behalf of the zone. More information about the zone can be found in the Totara Park School case study.



**For more information on the Plateau School EnviroSchools initiative, please visit:**  
**[www.plateauenviroblog.blogspot.com](http://www.plateauenviroblog.blogspot.com)**  
**[www.schoolgen.co.nz/ss/schools/plateau.aspx](http://www.schoolgen.co.nz/ss/schools/plateau.aspx)**

# Totara Park School

## Trodders and Plodders

The Trodders and Plodders programme has run for the past five years at Totara Park School. It is a morning fitness club which is coordinated by a dedicated parent, Tom Clegg, with the support of the principal and sports co-ordinator.

The Trodders and Plodders club meets at 7.30am on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The activity is often a run, but sometimes the focus changes to biking or athletics depending on what the current inter-school competition is. At the end of the term the club has a big breakfast as a reward.

When asked why he dedicates so much time, Tom responded, “to help kids gain skills and confidence, which can make them feel good both physically and mentally.”



The number of students and parents that attend varies, but there is a core group who participate almost every time. The Sports Co-ordinator Andrew Herrick remarked, “A lot of parents participate and use the programme for their own work out and to spend time with their children - both of them benefit.” The programme teaches students good physical activity habits and helps to maintain and increase their fitness levels over the school year.

Fitness club promotions occur throughout Upper Hutt each year as part of Activation’s work plan. The promotion concept varies each year but over the past three years the number of fitness clubs has risen from two schools, to seven.

Totara Park has been one of the leading schools in this area.

## Run to Auckland

This event was set up to promote physical activity at Totara Park School and is a natural flow on from the Trodders and Plodders club. A 1km track is set up within the school boundaries and students run around the track as many times as possible over two summer lunchtimes. The aim is for the entire school to complete enough kilometres to run the distance from Wellington to Auckland and back.

In addition to students participating, the school makes this a family friendly, festival event and encourages many parents to become involved. The students are motivated by the collective goal and are able to work towards this with their peers.

“The best thing about this project is that everyone gets involved; parents, students and staff.” Tom Clegg reflected, “This project is about having fun, it makes the school community stronger. Some students do twelve or thirteen kilometres in one lunch time which is very impressive, but at the end of the day the outcomes of community spirit, fun and trying your best are prominent during this event.” Mike Mercer highly praises this event, “This event is one which promotes community connectedness and is a great opportunity for the wider school community to get involved in a healthy, family friendly initiative.”

## Sustainability

Students at Totara Park School learn the importance of sustainability and looking after the environment. They focus on waste minimisation and how ‘waste’ can be reused.

Recycling was set up within the school so that the students were taking an active role in sustainability studies and developing good habits regarding waste management.

It is hoped that this programme will set students up to be environmentally minded in future years.

Totara Park has developed a composting system with general composting as well as a worm farm. The knowledge that the students gain from learning about composting is put into action through the maintenance of a school vegetable garden which uses their compost.

## Raft Race

In 2010 Totara Park School staged their first ever Raft Race utilising one of Upper Hutt's key natural features – the Hutt River.

Safety was first priority and each raft needed to have two parents on board. Everybody had to have life jackets and a paramedic was present on the day.

The fun began with groups of students designing and making their own rafts. The students figured out what materials would float and what they could use to join their materials together. They enjoyed learning key outdoor skills while making their rafts. On the day they raced down the Hutt River and after sixteen minutes a raft made of blue barrels had crossed the finish line in first place. This event was a great success and is planned to become an annual event on the school calendar.

## Vegetable Gardens

Totara Park School was given a grant by the Healthy Eating Healthy Action fund to build vegetable gardens. The students had the task of finding out about vegetable gardens, how they could be designed and what vegetables would grow.

Now established, each class has one garden plot and students vote to decide what plants are grown. In class they learn about individual plants needs, how to look after them, how to identify plants by observing the leaves and to recognise when the produce is ready to be picked.

A stand is set up to sell the vegetables, fruit and herbs they grow when they are ready, giving students the opportunity to explore other areas such as business, money handling, pricing and customer interaction.



## GATE Co-ordination

Totara Park School sports coordinator Andrew Herrick organises a week long Gifted and Talented programme alongside Activation, Upper Hutt City Council for the Upper Hutt schools zone.

This project aims to extend Upper Hutt's talented sports people and it is the first programme in a pathway of extension projects that occur throughout schooling in Upper Hutt. One student from each Primary School in Upper Hutt is given the opportunity to take part in various physical activity and leadership modules.

A highlight for the students is watching the Hurricanes training then participating in rugby skills and drills with a Junior Hurricane team member. Other activities include coaching in football and golf, swim safety at H2O Xtream and sports nutrition.

Andrew Herrick commented, "The support for the project was fantastic, most of the things we did were free or at a minimal cost." He also suggested that the project was a great success and the students enjoyed themselves while receiving invaluable knowledge about sports, leadership and looking after themselves.



## House Competitions

At Totara Park School students are divided into four different house groups based on colours. These groups compete to win the house shield each year and points are gained across a variety of school activities. Every Friday inter-house games or competitions are held and across the year other key events also contribute.

The students in each house group range across all school years to encourage communication and collaboration between the full range of students at the school. This is beneficial as senior students have the opportunity to showcase their leadership skills and become role models for the juniors.

Belonging to a house group gives the students more sense of pride and identity knowing that they are part of a group dedicated to working together.

## UVPSSA participation

Totara Park School participates in most of the Upper Valley Primary Schools Sports Association (UVPSSA) events.

The sports co-ordinator Andrew Herrick meets with other sports co-ordinators from participating schools and together they discuss what events will be held over the year and who will run each event.

Andrew Herrick expressed that, "It works very well for the sports co-ordinators of the schools to be working together in this association." It is believed that participation rates in physical activity would be much lower without the UVPSSA events and leagues. It is a great way for students to meet other students from schools in the Upper Valley area and to create a sense of school pride.

Activation takes a lead role in the zone, providing much support for coordinators in terms of event management, resources, professional development and funding.

