



Case Study- Owairaka District School

When Diana Tregoweth started as Principal of Owairaka District School 10 years ago, she spent most of her time dealing with behaviour issues and grounds littered with rubbish. Owairaka District School is a decile 2 school in Mt Albert, Auckland. Diana knew that something needed to change, but she knew this wouldn't happen overnight. And so she began on Owairaka's journey of metamorphosis.

Initially Diana sought the support from the school staff. She asked them if being a school that promoted health and a green environment was something they wanted and were willing to work towards. With the staff in agreement, initiatives started appearing one by one.

Owairaka School surrounds itself with supportive people from many different groups. To pull together many external agencies, Health Promoting Schools came on board. The school now receives support from The Heart Foundation, EnviroSchools, Waste Wise, Travel Wise (Auckland Transport), Garden to Table Trust among others. Within the school there are groups that provide that connection to the parents including the Whanau group, Samoan Parents group, Friends of the School group.

To help combat the sea of rubbish that would appear after each morning tea and lunch time Owairaka decided to tackle the source of the rubbish: the tricky lunchbox. Along with some funding from the Healthy Eating, Healthy Action Nutrition Fund, the school purchased plastic lunchboxes with the label "Owairaka School supports healthy eating". Included in the lunchbox was the school's nutrition policy and Ministry of Health Eating Guidelines. A lunchbox is given to each new student to the school.

The school's student Health Promoting team worked with some interns from the Heart Foundation on a school community survey in 2009 from which the 'Make and Take' sandwich mornings were born. The survey identified a need for healthy lunchbox ideas including sandwiches, something that was foreign to many students and parents. School members can now purchase a \$2 sandwich from the Health Promoting team. They can make it themselves choosing the fillings they want.

Through great leadership from Diana, a proactive and supportive staff, engaging parents and enthusiastic students, Owairaka now has a number of functional gardens including a rongoa (Maori medicinal garden), Indian garden, an orchard and various edible gardens. The school also now has a Fale with a surrounding Pacific garden, hens, worm farm and composting system.

Owairaka staff are clever about weaving everything they do into the curriculum as well as meeting numeracy and literacy requirements, all supported by the school strategic plan. Diana sees all of this work as an aid to learning, not something that detracts from learning. She believes you can do both at the same time.

At the end of 2011, Owairaka District School was recognised by the Heart Foundation with a prestigious Gold te Harakeke Healthy Heart, the only school in Auckland to receive such an award that year. Their ingenious creation of such an environment means that they are considered by many as a flagship school, where staff and students can now solely focus on the joys of learning.