

# Water Safety Programme - bringing outdoor education to rural communities

## Puahue School, Waipa

Puahue School is a rural school in the Waikato region, 10 minutes drive from Te Awamutu. Seven teachers serve the roll of 142 students, where one quarter of the students identify as Maaori.

Puahue School belongs to a cluster of five schools alongside Wharepapa South, Pukeatua, Arohena and Kihikihi. With a response rate from Year 3-8 students of 87%, the *Sport Waikato Voice of Tamariki survey* found that only 42% of students from this cluster of schools were meeting the physical activity guidelines of 60 minutes a day of physical activity (PA).

## CASE STUDY



Conversations with the schools revealed that *Outdoor Education (EOTC)* was an area that could significantly improve the students' enjoyment and engagement in school activities.

**“ An increasing number of students are opting out of school camps and other EOTC opportunities due to financial constraints and the geographical location of our school communities, so to address this, we aim to become more self-sufficient in providing these enriching experiences for our tamariki within school in order to keep costs down. - Puahue School, Principal, Scott Wilson ”**

To help achieve this vision, Puahue School's principal Scott Wilson applied to Sport Waikato on behalf of the cluster for funding from Sport NZ's Tū Manawa fund. The funding was to be used for the promotion of water and bike safety activities, with water-based activities such as kayaking and paddleboarding, with an emphasis on water safety, to take place in the summer months.

Sport Waikato's Professional Learning Partner, Sarah Ryan, delivered staff water safety sessions for all cluster schools, with Puahue School then delivering skills training in the pool before transferring to Lake Arapuni once the students had gained confidence.

The goal was to help students foster a love of outdoor recreation and keep them motivated to stay active while providing opportunities to meet students from other small rural schools.

These outdoor experiences were closely linked to the curriculum, as well as mana whenua puurakau (local stories), ensuring the experience was culturally relevant and enriching.



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The Water Safety Programme delivered outstanding outcomes, significantly improving student confidence and reducing fear or uncertainty around water-based activities.

The data strongly supports the programme's continuation as a core component of Puahue School's curriculum, contributing directly to student wellbeing, safety and preparedness for EOTC and local water environments.



“ As confidence has grown through EOTC, so has learning. Students are more engaged, teachers can push learning further, and classrooms feel more positive and purposeful. - Scott Wilson, Principal ”

Funding received from Sport NZ's Tū Manawa fund helped with the purchase of 10 paddle boards, 10 kayaks, 25 life jackets and an enclosed outdoor education trailer for the Eastern Zone cluster of five schools. Thanks to this funding, and with the support of Sport Waikato's Primary Learning Partner Sarah Ryan, the Water Safety Programme can be delivered for years to come.



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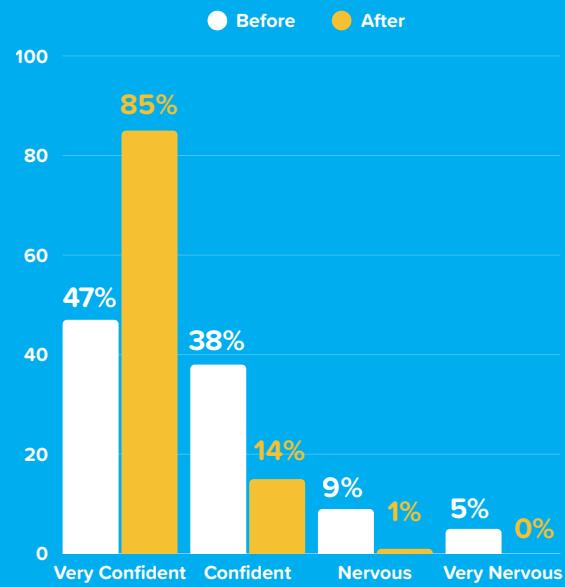


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## IMPACT



The amount of 'confident' students has even decreased with the growth in 'very confident' students.

## Overall

'Very Confident'

40 → 72

'Nervous' or 'Very Nervous'

12 → 1

99% of students are now 'Confident' or 'Very Confident'

“ The Tū Manawa fund has helped approx 580 students in our cluster of schools to access the resources needed to provide accessible outdoor experiences ”

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