

Creating Space to Play

King Country Rugby Union

King Country Rugby Union (KCRU) identified participation gaps for tamariki and rangatahi, particularly those less confident or outside traditional pathways. With the support of Tū Manawa funding they delivered kura-based technical sessions to the rangatahi and tamariki alongside kura staff with a focus on teaching core PE skills with a rugby flavour designed to suit all levels of fitness and abilities.

The Challenge

Traditional competition structures created barriers for rangatahi and tamariki, especially those with low confidence, limited experience, or restricted access due to geography, transport, or cultural context.

The Solution

- In-kura rugby activations delivered by KCRU Rugby Development Officers
- Strong kaupapa Māori approach, including use of te reo Māori
- Focus on fun, inclusion, and participation over outcomes
- A non-competitive rippa carnival removing scoring and performance pressure

Why It Worked

- Accessibility – Delivery within kura removed transport and confidence barriers
- Environment – Non-competitive format reduced pressure and anxiety
- Relationships – Strong connections with kura and kaiako built trust
- Cultural relevance – Te reo Māori and kaupapa Māori principles increased engagement



The results

7 kura

Approx. 700 rangatahi and tamariki engaged across the programme

28 teams participated in King Country Rugby Pōtae Rippa Carnival at the culmination of the in-kura sessions.

Increased first-time participation in rugby

Strong whānau attendance and community engagement

Now they're proud to participate and give it a go." – Kaiako



System Impact

- Strengthened pathways between kura and community sport
- Upskilled teachers to continue delivery independently
- Created a repeatable model for inclusive sport delivery

School and Community Outcomes

- Increased confidence and willingness to participate
- Greater engagement from less active tamariki
- Strengthened whānau connection to sport
- Positive shifts in attitudes toward physical activity

Learnings

- Removing competition increases participation
- Kura-based delivery is critical for engagement
- Cultural alignment strengthens impact
- Flexibility is needed to address barriers like travel

Scalability

- Embedding delivery in schools/kura
- Removing competitive structures
- Prioritising inclusion and cultural relevance

Next Steps

- Expand reach to more kura
- Address travel barriers for future events
- Continue building capability within kura
- Grow participation opportunities beyond the carnival



“She doesn’t really like sport, but she came home excited because she got to represent her kura. That meant everything to her” - Parent

[Read the full story.](#)

