

Interactive Case Study: ALOPHA Wellbeing Initiative

What were the business drivers/problems you were experiencing that inspired you to run the programme?

- The abysmal results of the low academic achievement of Maori and Pacific Island students in the New Zealand Education system over the last 45 years.
- The sudden passing of my oldest sibling (34 years) in 2006 around the same time and praying for divine inspiration lead me to find an alternative way to help both myself and learning and achievement in the education sector.
- An increase in students becoming more stressed and anxious in schools with more stress related disorders.

Why did you decide to choose this particular approach?

- I am passionate about “learning to learn” ideology and I strongly felt there must be other ways to reach our Maori and Pacific Island students.
- My Pacific Island identity as a Samoan male defines me as a collective thinker with a village based mind-set and it was outrageous for me to think that whole villages and whole nations are failing?
- I made connections to various educators who were researching accelerated learning based initiatives globally

What were the outcomes you were hoping to get?

- That every student is able to identify what stress is, how to reduce it and give them essential tools needed in order to become a more effective and resourceful learner for the rest of their lives.

Describe a brief overview of the programme you put/are putting in place?

The ALOPHA Wellbeing initiative in schools aims to improve the wellbeing of students on a daily basis to assist and enhance learning, engagement and achievement. It is an early intervention stress awareness tool (online and offline) which encourages accelerated learning, optimised potential for higher achievement over time.

How many people were/are involved?

- Ten schools (2 colleges) in the Wellington Area have trial various elements of the ALOPHA Wellbeing initiative over the last 6 years.

How did you promote the programme to participants?

- By using my networks, and arranging meetings with school leaders to help students who were not achieving, anti-social behaviour, being overly anxious or who have undiagnosed disorders.

How did you run it?

- Some schools they requested 60 students for two full day workshops then with daily 20 minute sessions
- Another school wanted to trial it only with students with anti-social behaviour.
- The most effective format was to present to the teaching staff at a staff meeting and implement and model to every class

What were/are your successes?

- Coming to terms with how my older brother passed away through this personal and professional research.
- Reframe the way in which I approached my teaching as a professional teacher.
- 50% increase in learning and achievement in one school after implementing after a 3 year period.
- Being able to teach the ALOPHA techniques to children who teach their parents at home.

The challenges were:

- Risking close family and personal and work relationships to develop my journey
- Sharing my research to my own teaching profession who did not wish to be challenged

What learnings have you taken from the programme?

- People want to change but sometimes they need you to hold their hand
- It takes courage to be the change you want to see in your community

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