

STEAM

Tahuna Case Study



PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE WITH STEAM

Introducing STEAM into curriculums can be a challenge. Read how these Otago Peninsula Principals led by example to collaborate and bring on experts such as OfficeMax to create the Otakou STEAM Cluster.

Descriptions such as “Collaborative”, “Critical Thinker” and “Problem Solver” have become more and more valuable on our CVs. And for good reason. As technology shrinks our world, students of today must prepare to enter a workforce that is connected, fast-paced and ever-changing.

But how do you teach collaboration, empathy and critical thinking when you also have a curriculum, and little-to-no resources? This was the challenge the Otago Peninsula Principals decided to tackle. Led by Tony Hunter, Principal of Tahuna Normal Intermediate and with the help of Iain Cook-Bonney, ICT Facilitator. Their goal: to help develop “Global Citizens”. I.e. empathetic, collaborative students who are also well-versed in the STEAM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math).

School budgets—as notoriously tight as they are—meant Tony and Iain had to do some creative thinking of their own to get this goal underway. The solution came in two parts:

1. The Otago Community Trust

A “philanthropic organisation that applies its Trust funds for charitable and other purposes which are of benefit to the community.” One of these funds is the Innovative Learning Fund. This Fund allows schools, or clusters of schools, to apply for funding towards projects that involve innovative clustered learning.

2. The Otakou STEAM Cluster

The formation of a group of nine schools on the Otago Peninsula (including Tahuna Normal Intermediate). Funded by the Innovative Learning Fund, they will explore authentic local and global contexts through STEAM.

“We wanted to look at ways we could bring down the classroom walls. Teachers and classes connecting through digital collaboration and learning together.” Iain Cook-Bonney

The Challenge

Once the Otakou STEAM Cluster secured their funding, it was time to start stocking their schools with the materials, technology and equipment they needed to execute this three-year plan.

After approaching several suppliers it became more and more evident that they were unlikely to get all the products they wanted from one supplier. Not only that, but often the quoted prices were out of their budget.

The Solution

Iain had the foresight to check with Tahuna Normal Intermediate's OfficeMax Account Manager, Scott McIntosh. To his delight, Scott assured him, "You want it, you got it!" OfficeMax was able to provide the Otakou Cluster with all the products they needed, either at cost or below what they had budgeted for.

"Really, OfficeMax was the only supplier that came back and said, "You just name it, we'll get it for you." Plus we only had one person that we had to deal with, and they were our one-stop port of call. This was really great and easy to deal with." Iain Cook-Bonney

The Result

1. Well-stocked schools:

With a focus on Technology and Art for 2019, Tony and Iain have made sure the nine Cluster Schools have been well supplied with cutting-edge products.

With a three-year plan in place, some of these products will be used across the board, while others are more focused on the year's subjects: Botleys and mBots, for example.

Most importantly, the smaller schools in the region—which previously did not have the resource to access these products—now have access to all the resources they need. Whether it's products or workshops and support for their teachers.



2. Happy teachers:

Iain and his team have already run eight workshops, with another eight on the way. These workshops help teachers discover and learn about their new tools, as well as providing them with the support of and connection to other teachers in their region.

3. Engaged students:

While it's early days still for the students, Iain says the engagement has been high. To track progress, they will be surveying students across the next three years. We look forward to seeing how the Otakou Cluster students develop!



Looking towards the future

Iain's ultimate goal is to help develop "Global Citizens". The students of the Otakou Cluster will be learning how to collaborate, not just within their classroom, but across the Otago Peninsula, the country and even globally. With digital technology, they could work with their sister schools in China on a conservation project, or check in with a school in Mexico on their science projects. The possibilities are limitless!

"We'd like to see our schools looking at a fully integrated approach to learning. So subjects aren't taught in silos and students not just looking at a worksheet. Instead, they'll be looking at the issues and context that affect us in everyday life. Whether it's a local project, such as a Harbour re-development, or a bigger issue such as climate change." Iain Cook-Bonney

**Need help with your STEAM program? Talk to one of our Specialists today.
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