



As we end the school year and begin the summer break, the leadership team have been taking time to reflect on what makes Mount Roskill Grammar School such a special place. Why do staff stay so long? Why do so many families, many from out of zone, choose to send their children here? Why do we consistently get excellent results? Why are those that leave us so well equipped for the future?

There are many answers to these questions but certainly high among them is the genuine care that is afforded every person in our community. The notion that both individuals matter and individuality matters. The Roskill Way of Manaakitanga and Whanaungatanga.

Last month the Ministry of Education published guidelines outlining good practice around student wellbeing and how this aligns with student success. The purpose of the guide is to support all Secondary Schools in New Zealand improve their practice. Mount Roskill Grammar School featured prominently; the following is taken from page 47.

Mount Roskill Grammar School has created a culture that supports wellbeing and academic achievement through applying the overarching values of manaakitanga and whanaungatanga:

- Manaakitanga: through uplifting, fostering and nurturing the mana of each person
- Whanaungatanga: through fostering relationships and cherishing diversity, seeking the support of parents, families and whānau and making good connections between people.

This philosophy is student centred and underpins learning, policy and practice. It uses a relational approach ensuring all students have agency and an active voice in learning and pastoral support structures through an inquiry and co-construction process. Students are encouraged to be aspirational and staff approaches are strengths based. Teaching and learning is collaborative and encompasses a 'teaching as inquiry' model. Teachers access the student voices to check on what is working and they support student agency in the planning and learning pathways.

Citizenship, relationships, responsibility and restorative approaches are embedded within the school culture and pastoral structure, which is known as 'the Roskill way'. Student Services consists of an interdisciplinary team of receptionists, four counsellors, three nurses, a GP and a physiotherapist. The service delivery model is based on the recommendations from the Youth 2012 evaluation of the effectiveness of school based health services. The study identified that a warm and inviting waiting area and proactive and responsive staff promote easier access to health care. Making use of social media to book appointments and communicate were all indicators of better service engagement as reported by students.

Counsellors and students jointly run a number of co-constructed, proactive and preventative health programmes within the school. These help to foster the community philosophy of connectedness, support and to build respectful reciprocal relationships.

Over 200 students are trained as peer mediators by the Peace Foundation, as well as organisations like Rainbow Youth, Youthlaw, Human Rights Advocates and SHINE. Their role is to be 'ambassadors of social justice' standing up for kindness, respect and justice for all students. They provide

confidential restorative mediations, as well as watching out for bullying and harassment within the school environment and helping students to get the support they need. The Leadership Through Peer Mediation (2017) research assessed the impact of peer mediators in nine secondary schools. They found positive effects of the programme on students, teachers and school environments. Student leaders also promote messages of inclusion and community, especially around mental health as part of the 'Live4Tomorrow' programme. Their aim is to destigmatise mental health and promote help seeking behaviours in their student population. Students are trained by the community organisation ZEAL.

With support from the Auckland DHB and Bodysafe, senior students are trained to lead in the Peer Sexuality Support Programme to teach about relationships and sexuality and promote respectful relationships and sexual consent. These students run an annual consent awareness week. Students and staff of the school diversity group also meet regularly to promote a school culture that is safe and inclusive for community members with diverse sexual and gender identities.

Transition pathways are well planned and considered. Mount Roskill Grammar School has good relationships with its feeder primary schools. They also interview and get to know each of the students who are enrolled to start in Year 9. The counsellors co-facilitate an interactive workshop with all Year 9 core classes on manaakitanga during the first term. They have found that this approach facilitates the referral process and students feel more comfortable approaching them. Students are familiarised with how to access the student support centre and are given an explanation of confidentiality and the limitations of maintaining confidence.

Two approaches are used to identify those students who need extra support. Counsellors invite students to complete the online Travellers questionnaire, and youth-health trained nurses conduct a psycho-social health assessment (HEEADSSS) with each Year 9 student. Those identified as high risk are invited to participate in the small-group resiliency building programme called Travellers. The aim of this counsellor-facilitated programme is to enhance connectedness and support students to develop the skills and resources to adjust to life challenges. Over 80 students each year participate in this programme at Mount Roskill Grammar School. An evaluation of the programme was undertaken by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER).

Taken from Te Pakiaka Tangata. Strengthening Student Wellbeing for Success - *Guidelines to assist New Zealand Secondary Schools and Wharekura in the provision of good practice in pastoral care, guidance and counselling*. Published by The Ministry of Education in November 2017.

We wish all our families and the greater community a restful and peaceful festive season and we look forward to continuing to help our students 'reach the heights' in 2018.

MRGS Leadership Team