

SABBATICAL REPORT

Jenny Gellen, Waitara High School

Purpose

To investigate how to better prepare Waitara High School students for university study and future pathways.

1. We are a decile 2 school and over my tenure as Principal, more students are aiming to attend university. How can we make the transition easier?
2. Our pass rates are increasing and students have the ability to attend university but for some, they see the challenge as too difficult. How do we change that attitude and belief?
3. We have access to scholarships which students don't access prior to study, why is this?
4. What can the school teach to make the transition to university easier?

Action

I visited New Zealand universities and met with past students to gather their voice regarding issues they and their friends had faced with regard to attending or not attending university.

I gathered information from the students who are attending university about what would have made the transition easier for them.

In addition, I spoke to staff at Otago University regarding the issues they see students from small, low decile schools facing when starting at University.

In addition, I met with past students who had attended other tertiary education facilities as well as spoke with those who had left university part way through study as to why they had left and what might have made a change for them.

I would like to thank the Waitara High School students who are attending the following universities for their insightful and thoughtful contribution to this report.

Otago University

Canterbury University
Victoria University
Waikato University

I chose not to visit Auckland University as we currently have no students studying there.

A summary of my findings follows:

We are a decile 2 school and over my tenure as Principal, more students are aiming to attend university. How can we make the transition easier?

- Past students to return at the end of the first university semester to talk to year 12 and 13 students
- Provide information regarding banking options/insurance and budgeting
- Set up a facebook page so students know who is coming to their university so they can meet them on arrival and assist with the transition and answer questions. Information can be posted by students regarding accommodation, flatting, courses, textbooks events etc.
- Ensure that those going to a tertiary setting have completed all Study link requirements well BEFORE they leave school.
- Ensure all students know how to take relevant notes in lectures. If it is on a slide, don't copy it!!
- Choose courses wisely. Talk to those who have been there and done that or university course advisors.
- Providing information regarding the strengths of each university with regard to courses.
- Emphasising the importance of attending tutorials and tutor groups. Setting up tutorials and subject specific tutor groups at school to assist with study.
- Emphasising the importance of time management and working to deadlines.

Our pass rates are increasing and students have the ability to attend university but for some, they see the challenge as too difficult. How do we change that attitude and belief?

- Continue sending junior students to look at the University system and what happens there. (Waitara High School currently sends a bus load of Year 10 students with a significant whanau member to spend a day at a University to look at how they work, what lectures are, where they would live etc.)
- Past students returning to the school to talk about University and the opportunities and support that is offered.
- Motivational speaking from past students involved in a variety of jobs including how to follow that particular pathway on a regular basis.
- Set goals throughout time at school and work out the plan to achieve the goals. This can be done with guidance to start with at Year 9.

We have access to scholarships which students don't access prior to study, why is this?

- Past students to talk about the necessity of applying for scholarships
- Financial information need to be more thoroughly explained regarding how scholarships can impact on student loans.
- Mentoring students through the scholarship application process.

What can the school teach to make the transition to university easier?

- APA referencing needs to be taught from year 9. Students stated that referencing correctly can be the difference between passing and failing an assignment and this needs to be taught in school from Year 9 so it becomes part and parcel of what they do for assignments.
- Deadlines need to be adhered to when set by teachers as once they are at university, a deadline is a deadline!
- Ensure all students leave school with C.V's completed as they are used repeatedly once they leave school.
- Know your own strengths and be real about yourself. This is a BIG ONE !
- Providing more careers information regarding what is available once you leave school and this may not just be university or polytechnic courses
- Teaching a wide variety of study techniques
- Changing courses or subjects is fine but talk to a course advisor.
- How to take key points from readings, learn to skim read for main points.
- Independence in learning and taking responsibility for completing work on time...this can be reinforced by staff by ensuring deadlines are adhered to.

It was a privilege and a pleasure meeting up with my past students to hear how the school can better prepare our students for the outside world. I would like to acknowledge their input. I would also like to acknowledge the work the Senior Leadership team of Waitara High School did while I was absent. I would also like to thank the Board of Trustees for their support during this time.

Future Waitara High School students will hopefully benefit from the information within this report.

Jenny Gellen
Principal

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