



INNOVATIVE LEARNING TOOLKIT

PROJECT TITLE: AWHIWORLD

Tags: Gaming, Behaviour Change

Awhiworld was a pilot initiative using ideas from [alternate reality gaming](#) to support environmental awareness education and behaviour change within a decile 1 South Auckland Primary school.

Starting in mid 2008, [Maggie Buxton](#), worked with the Curriculum Development Manager of the school to design an integrated curriculum environmental and community development pilot. The concept was that an parallel reality known as 'Awhiworld' ran in and around the school and neighbourhood. This world was accessed via 'portals' located in the school garden and in the playing fields. From time to time visitors would appear mysteriously through the portals to give the children information from awhi world that would assist them to save the world from environmental destruction.

Gatekeepers were also vital to awhi world, and children spent time identifying the qualities of guardians and gatekeepers and seeing how these qualities could be fostered in themselves. Later, at the guidance of some other mysterious portal visitors, children constructed gatekeepers out of recycled materials and placed them to guard the vital school garden portal.

They engaged in a number of creative activities under the direction of the teaching staff who helped them make prints, paint and create story boards. A famous NZ mixed media artist arrived through a portal and led the children in a forensic examination and evidence gathering expedition locating and logging hidden portals in the school.

Local police assisted with some of the theatrical elements by delivering mysterious messages from Awhi world to school assemblies.

All of this work was integrated completely within the curriculum so that goals for social studies, maths, science and health curriculum were met via the activities and work to 'discover' awhiworld. It was also completely integrated within a larger, mainstream community development project instigated by local police and conducted in partnership with the school, local marae, local council and housing nz.

Initial feedback shows that this initiative, together with others in the school, have succeeded in changing children's behavior, and also engaged pupils who were harder to reach. This is mainly due to use of game like mechanisms and characters, and a narrative that children can relate to, and injecting some fun and mystery into the process.

Why is it relevant to PTS?

Using games and mystery, and stimulating the imagination is a wonderful way to teach children about the environment, and build their capacity to think systemically. Rather than



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take a traditional 'scientific' approach to work, it sometimes works to borrow ideas from the world of games and use science fiction to create excitement.

Better integrating art based approaches within long term planning and day to day curriculum is vital to increase effectiveness and sustainability of programmes.

Ideas and tips for PTS:

Create some small scale stories that can be used as an overarching plot for a number of activities within a school.

Use mystery and play to help people discover hidden secrets and stories around their local streams...and utilise local actors and creative professionals to surprise audiences and seed clues.

Contact and further information:

Further details about this project can be found on Maggie's blog: <http://un-fiction.blogspot.com/search/label/awhiworld>