

PROJECT K - MAURI TU, MAURI TAU



OVERVIEW

Project K is proven to positively change lives and improve academic outcomes. Graduates tell us that Project K has increased their self belief and confidence.

An innovative educational programme developed by New Zealand mountaineer and adventurer, Sir Graeme Dingle and lawyer, Jo-anne Wilkinson, Lady Dingle, Project K was designed to build self confidence and give life-direction to young New Zealanders.

Project K was originally developed in 1995 after consultation with leading educationalists, youth workers, parents and communities.

The Graeme Dingle Foundation has been successfully partnering with schools and communities to deliver Project K for over 20 years.

THE PROGRAMME

Project K is a 14-month mentoring programme designed for Year 10 students. It involves three parts; (wilderness adventure, community challenge and an individual mentoring partnership with a trained mentor).

Project K focuses on building confidence, developing life skills, promoting good health and encouraging a positive attitude.

The aim of Project K is to arm these young people with a belief in their own ability to complete tasks, achieve goals, and help them find purpose and direction transforming their lives.

PROJECT K MODEL OF MENTORING

The Project K Model of Mentoring is founded on the principle of 'promoting the wellbeing of young people and to help them find purpose and direction.'

This is achieved by:

- **promoting** the young person's sense of well-being and ability to maximise their potential through the mentoring partnership
- **developing** an authentic, respectful partnership with the young person and their family
- **acknowledging** the whole person
- **supporting** the young person to set and realise their dreams and goals for positive personal growth
- **focusing** on activities that help build self-efficacy, resilience and self confidence
- **role modelling** effective life skills

Project K is underpinned by this whakatauki (proverb):

Whaia te pae tawhiti kia tata, whare pae tata, whakamaua kia tua
Seek out the distant horizons, cherish those you attain.

Transforming young lives forever – Oranga Taiohi, Oranga Ake

Project K has given my son a huge boost of confidence and encouraged a lot of self-belief. It has brought out skills he didn't realise he had – leadership, participation, tolerance of others. On his return from the Wilderness Experience, he said "Mum, I feel different on the inside", and that was great to hear."

Project K Parent

"Project K makes a difference, it touches teens like me, it changes lives, our ways of thinking, our future."

Project K Graduate

The goal setting skills I learnt from Project K and my mentor have made me realise that if I stay focused and believe in myself, I can achieve more than I thought I was capable of."

Project K Graduate

"Mentoring is an enormously satisfying and wonderful experience. You help young New Zealanders achieve their goals and watch them discover the opportunities the world holds. At the same time you are developing your own leadership qualities."

Project K Mentor



HOW PROJECT K WORKS

Project K is innovative because it combines a number of proven strategies in working with youth into one cohesive programme.

Project K is made up of three stages which ensure long-term behavioural change.

Stage 1 - Wilderness Adventure

The first stage is an amazing three week outdoor experience. Students are exposed to a range of activities such as kayaking, abseiling, tramping, mountain biking and camping. This stage provides personal challenges and develops life skills such as goal setting, teamwork, perseverance, self reliance and resilience.

Wilderness experiences are a tried and true method of providing a young person with a short term boost to their self-esteem.

Stage 2 - Community Challenge

The Project K Community Challenge aims to transfer the skills students learn on the Wilderness Adventure to the Project K students' community contexts and everyday life.

Students are encouraged to think about their community and their future, explore and access resources and opportunities available locally. They undertake a community project to 'give something back' to their community.

The Community Challenge is designed to help young people see five things:

1. That the challenges they face in day-to-day life can be overcome just the same as those they face kayaking on a lake or climbing a mountain.
2. Just as in the wilderness they had something to offer their team, they have something to offer their community.
3. To help them feel more comfortable in their community because they understand how it works.
4. To identify the resources that exist in the near and wider community for their benefit and to focus on the resources which are relevant to their life.
5. To develop a sense of direction which is expressed in their personal contract (goals for the next 12 months).

Stage 3 - Project K Mentoring

The final and perhaps most important phase of the programme is the mentoring. Carefully screened and trained mentors are paired with students for 12 months to support and encourage them in achieving their goals.

This stage provides a young person with a friendly shoulder to lean on. Mentors are friendly, objective listeners who help strengthen the positive changes made in the first two stages of the programme. All Project K mentors have been trained or have equivalent qualifications.

The mentoring relationship complements the student's existing relationships with parents, caregivers and teachers. Project K mentoring follows the best practice guidelines outlined in the "Guide to Effective Practice in Youth Mentoring New Zealand", published by the New Zealand Youth Mentoring Network.



THE EVIDENCE

Research is an essential part of all our programmes. Each one is thoroughly evaluated, which allows us to ensure the programmes are working, measure success and report on outcomes.

Research shows that Project K:

- improves relatedness and sense of community
- improves resilience and connectedness
- students are less likely to truant
- improves attendance, employment and looking for educational opportunities
- can close the achievement gap between students from low and high decile schools
- reduces illegal drug use over time improves higher levels of academic, social and help-seeking self-efficacy

