

## Fairfield College Year 10 camp report – November 2020

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2020 was the first time we had planned and implemented a year 10 camp at Fairfield College for several years. We had an idea of what it might look like but to engage and capture our students' interests, we needed to manage several variables to make sure we could successfully give our students a camp they would enjoy and take away some personal positives.



The first consideration was setting up a location that was close enough logistically, but not so close that the students felt they were still within distance of their homes and/or parents had the ability to “pop in”. We managed to facilitate our camp at Dickies Flat Adventure camp in the heart of the Karangahake Gorge. This camp provided us with so many options. We had a well set up camp area,

with suitable shelter for bad weather, a large open area for tents, well maintained toilets, and plenty of activities effectively in the middle of the bush. This campsite meant we could genuinely offer the students the experience of ‘roughing it’ while still have protection from the elements and some everyday comforts. For us, this site ticked all the boxes in terms of a suitable campsite for our students. We always had in mind that not all the students would be keen on the outdoors, initially, and we wanted to make sure the students were not frightened off by the exposed nature of the camp before even getting there. It is a site that we would happily return to with even more ideas for 2021.

**The 3 B's** is a motto at Fairfield College that we encourage our students to always try and live by. They are the foundation of many of our conversations about how to treat others and how to conduct ourselves. Within the camp we felt it was another opportunity to encourage the 3 B's as these would ultimately dictate whether we had a positive camping experience or not. We were very conscious of the fact, that for many, this was potentially their first camping experience, first time in a tent, or even potentially the first time of travelling outside of Hamilton. So, it was important we observed each other's actions and made sure our own reflected that of a positive member of the camp community.

The first “B” we consistently wanted to see was the students **Being Responsible** during camp. Whether it was picking up rubbish after themselves, or others, it was important that we left the environment with as little recognition of our presence as possible. Students were responsible for working in their groups to make their own meals, clean their own dishes and make sure their jobs were completed. A sense of community was evidentially felt as the students raised to the challenge and made this campsite their

'home'. There were special students that went the extra mile and did more than others in the clean up without any solicitation and that was great to see.

Students also needed to be responsible around the activities. Putting others first, including the teachers who would have the responsibility to act if something did go wrong, the students discussed and recognised their responsibility to the group to not put themselves in known danger and to keep an eye out on each other.

***Being Respectful*** was something we did not really have to manage at all. The level at which our students operated with their peers, staff and camp owners was a pleasure to see. Being respectful is something we believe should always be present. In this camping situation it was vital it was there. Living in close quarters to each other, cooking meals with each other, completing challenging task...it is a recipe for high-tension and it's a great environment for the students to test their respectfulness.

And finally, ***Being the Best You Can Be***, is something we encourage the students to be to get the most out of any situation.

Whether the student feels they can achieve the outcome, or whether they are going to feel vulnerable, it is important they learn that regardless, they try and be the best they can be in that situation. This camp included a range of challenges that we felt captured the whole groups skills. So, no matter what, we knew there would be a role for any student at some



point in the activities. It was important in the planning that the students got a sense of success and being an active participant. It could be as big as constructing the raft, or as small as making a burger for themselves or the group. In any situation the students would be engaged, and if they ever felt they could not complete the challenge, then they would be the best they could be for the group.



Being the best they could be obviously extended to their actions in camp as well. Tactically, students were given boundaries and freedom that allowed for them to make 'good' decisions. Decisions that did not put themselves or others at risk, or decisions that meant camp was a negative place to be. The students managed their time extremely well. Connecting through camp games, like volleyball, or just 'chatting' on the large tyre at the end of camp. It really

was a positive thing to see our students come together and connect while bringing the 3 B's to life.

One of the primary goals we discussed as a planning staff was to take our students into an environment where for 24 hours they had to "Connect" to something other than their device. Dickies Flat Adventure camp, again, was the perfect fit for this camp. It is a Wi-Fi free area and reception is very hard to find. This meant that naturally the students would have to connect to different things and ways they might not normally do. For the students, the majority would have never spent much time in the bush before. There was a lot to teach them about protecting our natural environment, but also what we have on our doorstep as a nation. For us we wanted the students to **Connect to the Environment**, to be responsible national citizens. This included talking about DOCs role in the bush, who they are and what they do. Through the activities we provided we felt there was an organic opportunity for the students to connect to their surroundings. The activities we ran were, orienteering, raft building, low ropes course, waka craft building, camp preparation, and a trip to the swimming hole. Through these activities we saw students engage in their environment. We saw them respect the ngahere by leaving green flora to keep living. We saw them think about the trace we left behind on the



environment and how to tidy up after ourselves. We saw them talk about the stars and Milky Way in the clear night sky. There were questions that showed us they were observing and taking in the environmental impact we have as users, especially about Kauri Dieback. Students were seen observing possums in the trees as the night set in,

something that most had never seen in a natural environment. All of this 'connection' was made possible by the environment we had these students in. It was all there for us to utilise and the learning that took place was far greater than we as a staff had anticipated.

The last outcome we wanted to achieve as a cohort was to **Connect to Each Other** and provide the opportunity for students to form some new relationships with their peers and the staff.





The activities operated in hour-long rotations with staff allocated to an activity the whole camp. This meant the students were able to work with new staff throughout the camp and get to see them in a completely different light to which they view them as teachers at school. The operating of the activities worked well with the staff becoming more and more familiar with what worked well and what did not. This largely depended on the group ability and

dynamics. The teachers were able to adapt as they felt they needed to for each group.

Students at first struggled with the lack of 'screen time' and they resisted at first the opportunity to connect with each other on different levels. However, organically, the environment meant they had no other option apart from trying to engage each other, find out more about each other and maybe explore different ways to waste time with



each other. Students had to work together throughout the camp and rely on each other to complete tasks and chores around the camp. This is something that we felt the students again adapted to very well and it became more about the collective rather than the



individual.

In one of our debriefs we completed with groups in the evening we had some truly inspiring comments that made us as a staff believe the camp had been a true success.

*"We didn't want to come on this camp and stay out in the bush, but this has been the best camp ever".*

*"When we see you at school, we didn't really notice you or think you'd be any fun, but you girls are pretty sweet and you are people we'd say hi to now. It's been cool hanging out with you".*

*"I didn't think I would be into any off this stuff, but I wish we could do this again next year!"*

These were a few of the positive comments we heard that night and these debriefs really made the camp outcomes come to life and transparent for the group.



The final walk out of camp was a great way to end the camp for the students. It connected them back to the history of the area and gave them context about what this area was used for. They got to connect to nature

once again but also see first-hand the awesome tracks we get access to in NZ, thanks to the work of DOC. It rounded off a great camp for the staff and students departing and left them wanting more, which was hugely encouraging.



We have POET to thank and in particular, Brian Connelly and Donald Matheson who helped provide resources and ideas to get this camp off the ground. Without their help and their support offering funding this would not have been possible. It is great to have the opportunity to connect with POET and provide training and support for staff in order to offer these opportunities for our students. We really can't wait to go again in 2021!!