



ASIA: AWARE SCHOOLS

ASIA NEW ZEALAND FOUNDATION • EDUCATING FOR ASIA CASE STUDIES • SERIES ONE 2011

EDUCATING FOR ASIA
CASE STUDY: TE PUKE HIGH SCHOOL



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“Building these bridges and these connections with Asia is absolutely vital.”

INTRODUCTION

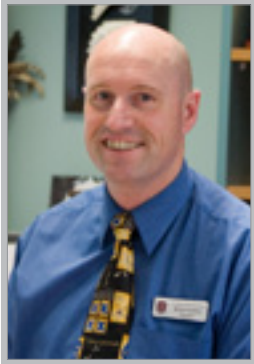
Te Puke High School in the Bay of Plenty is a decile 5, co-educational, state secondary school with a roll of 1050 students. Since 2007 it has had a reciprocal exchange programme with North Vista Secondary School in Singapore. The relationship has led to personal growth and increased global awareness for all those concerned.



AN ENRICHING CULTURAL EXPERIENCE

This case study looks at the ‘twinning’ programme established between Te Puke High School in the Bay of Plenty and North Vista Secondary School in Singapore – what it means to the schools, the staff and the students who have taken part.

ALAN LIDDLE: TE PUKE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL



"We are becoming more conscious of the need for the school community to be culturally and globally aware."

Alan Liddle: Te Puke High School principal

I went to an Asia:NZ seminar for principals and enjoyed finding out about the "Asia Aware" focus. Our school was already participating in the twinning programme and were – and still are – getting a lot from it. But I think there is more that we can do in partnership with Asia:NZ in terms of staff development to promote Asia awareness.

We have a significant Indian community in Te Puke and have made a commitment to develop our relationship with members of that community. After Maori, Indians make up the second largest minority group in the school. We identified that we had some difficulties with aspects of the Indian students' attendance and achievement; in 2009 we put in place a home-school partnership to concentrate on making sure that we better meet their needs as we seek to improve outcomes for all our students.

We have also completed the documentation to prepare the way for international students to come to our school, and have further developed our ESOL programme to support them. One of the results of our involvement in the twinning programme is that we are becoming more conscious of the need for the school community to be culturally and globally aware. Asia is significant for the country as a whole and therefore needs to be something that Te Puke High concentrates on too.

Although the twinning programme involves just a small group of students each year, it is having a ripple effect, especially on the friends and families of the students and teachers who go. The fundraising associated with it is an important part of our public profile in the community. We feature in the local paper, and on local radio, and we run events that are popular with the community. We have also won the support of the local Bay of Plenty regional council. The students have gained a lot of experience from these fundraising events and from presenting their cause in the public domain.

We also feature the programme in our yearly prospectus, showing that our contact with Asia is a special annual event for this school. We're introducing an International Day to the school calendar to demonstrate our commitment to diverse cultures within the school.

The relationships between the teachers from both schools are an important development for us. We are discussing and sharing some of our systems and technology with North Vista. We have taken teachers through our revised curriculum document and talked about the importance of the New Zealand system of school self-management. In return we have taken on board aspects of how they run the core values programme in their school, and partly as a result of that we are introducing a focus on "Respect" next year. There are definite synergies between the two schools.

We want these gains to be long-term, as they involve quite a major shift in the mindset of people, in both schools. It means being careful about how we build our relationships with everyone throughout the school. We want everyone to feel it is a real opportunity to develop ourselves.

We are heading down a great track, and the benefits in terms of education and cultural experience for teachers, students and the community are just outstanding. Building these bridges and these connections with Asia is absolutely vital.

TE PUKE HIGH AND NORTH VISTA SECONDARY SCHOOLS: TWINNING PROGRAMME

“It’s important to recognise how the world is changing. Our generation looked to England, and the next generation looked to America. But more and more we are going to have to look to Asia for our future, so this visit is a starter for looking in the direction of Asia for our future” (Chris Pointon, HOD Social Science).

Te Puke High School has developed a school relationship with North Vista Secondary, a school in Singapore. Their “twinning” programme provides a means for cultural and educational exchanges between the students and teachers of the schools. As this case study shows the relationship also leads to personal growth and increased global awareness for those who take part.



The twinning programme has operated since 2007. About 25 to 30 Year 11 students from both schools exchange each year. The Te Puke students spend about ten days in Singapore, billeted with families and engaging in cultural and educational programmes. The North Vista students spend three weeks in New Zealand altogether, with a week at Te Puke High School where they too are billeted with local families.

This highly successful programme has offered life-changing experiences to the teachers and students who have been involved. Towards the end of 2009 the North Vista students and their teachers were well into their New Zealand trip. This gave Asia:NZ an opportunity to find out how the experience of “twinning” worked from the perspective of both schools.

“I come from the back blocks of Te Puke! It was so different. But I just loved it. It gave me a bigger picture of what is out there” (Laura, student 2009 trip).

“Where do I start? It was truly a one-off life experience, where we learned and lived with a whole new culture” (Tupaea, a student from the 2009 trip).

“I gained educationally. I learned a lot more about the Singaporean education system. I also became aware of how we look at things differently, and how we live differently” (Rachel Ryan, English teacher, 2009 trip).

“The visit is eye-opening for us as teachers, not just for our students. We get to hear from the New Zealand teachers and although we are from very different cultures, generally our professional concerns are similar. We get a lot from our visit here” (Julia, teacher from North Vista).

“I was very interested to come to New Zealand to find out about another culture. I am well travelled to other countries but not to a “western society” before” (Kimberley, visiting North Vista student 2009).

HOW THE PROGRAMME STARTED: THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIPS

The Singapore government actively promotes “internationalisation” by supporting schools to travel to other countries. In 2004 North Vista Secondary School was one of the first to visit outside of Asia on a geography curriculum tour to New Zealand. Global Adventure and Kuaka New Zealand, two companies that specialise in education group travel to New Zealand, facilitated their trip. New Zealand provided a really different cultural experience for the North Vista students.

The first trip was so successful that when the Singapore government introduced its twinning programme for schools, North Vista was keen to continue its contact with New Zealand and link with a New Zealand school. The two companies assisted with this process and focused the New Zealand trip on Te Puke.

Based in the Bay of Plenty, Kuaka New Zealand organises educational and cultural tours between Singapore and New Zealand. The company employs staff who are experts on both countries and they worked on developing the twinning programme between the two schools. The three-way partnership between Kuaka and the schools has produced a unique relationship. Rich knowledge of the two countries and their education systems is shared to provide a programme that gives cultural, educational and personally enriching experiences to teachers and students.

The business and tourism expertise that Kuaka brings to the programme help it to be sustainable.

“The care, preparation and planning that we put in at the moment will not go away. It is a constant need for every trip. There has to be a good fit for each of the schools, and a willingness to overcome all the barriers. It is our job as partners of the schools to make the whole trip as seamless as possible. As well as the twinning programme between the schools the trip includes a tour of parts of the North Island, introducing the students to the New Zealand way of life. The Singapore government is looking for good results from its investment in education and the twinning programme. The main thing is for both schools to have an experience which generates new understanding of one another’s cultures” (Doug Farr, Director Kuaka).

At the moment the Te Puke/North Vista twinning partnership between Singapore and New Zealand is the most advanced school relationship. Kuaka is working with four other New Zealand schools to develop twinning links with Singapore for them.



PERSPECTIVES OF THE TWINNING PROGRAMME

TE PUKE TEACHERS



Simon McGillivray:
Deputy Principal, in charge of the
2009-10 twinning visits

Over the three years we feel that we've managed to build really positive relationships between people from very different cultural backgrounds. A lot of understanding has been built up, but it has taken some hard work to make sure that we got things right! For example, in Asian schools the aspect of staff hierarchy is very important. I think the Singaporean teachers now appreciate that although we have a structured leadership team our emphasis is more on the way we all

need to work together. It has been good to get things sorted out, and we have set a standard for how we work together.

We have really seen students develop as a result of going on the trip. For example, some have thought very seriously about going back to study in Asia or another culture. They also gain a lot of confidence, because they feel they are able to manage in a very different culture, with different languages being spoken around them, different values, different diet and so on. The trip does push them to their limits.

I think the billeting of the students with Singaporean families is a key feature of the trip. This involves spending time with people who may be very different from them. It is not their own environment and things are done according to the norms of a different community. It also provides a test of their ability to build relationships. Suddenly they are living and working together full-time with people they hardly knew before. For many of them this is the beginning of important friendships that last long after the visit.

The trip's programme is very busy and a lot is expected of the students:

- they are involved in North Vista classes
- they are expected to learn and perform different cultural dances and songs
- they present to the North Vista students
- there is a lot of travel and sightseeing, including a moving visit to the Singapore war memorial.

Our students are expected to fit in with whatever their billeting family does. They also have to cope with the heat, the congestion and crowds in a huge city. They learn a lot about Singaporean history and culture, and how the state of Singapore has been planned and developed. They go on a trip to Malaysia which is quite a different culture again. The time is really full on for them. But as a result we all have a fantastic experience which is quite different from just being a tourist.

Of course the whole thing is very expensive for the students. They have to do a lot of fundraising for it. So it is a big commitment and they really invest in making it a valuable experience. One outcome we have noticed in terms of their development is that many of the students who have gone on these trips have become our significant school leaders.

"We certainly gained a lot of cultural exposure and knowledge from the trip" (Simon).





“I have exchanged English resources with the North Vista teachers. We have developed a good relationship. I have extended my relationship with one of the teachers and her family and we will visit each other in the future.

I think through my going there and coming back I have been inspired and I have extended my multicultural ideas.

My students here can see that I am a teacher who values cultural input into my

classroom. We are building better relationships with our Indian students for example, and are now having some Indian nights. My Indian students were pleased that I had visited Asia, and I put the photo up in the classroom of me in my salwar kameez which a friend gave me. The students liked that and they do talk about it. They see that you value their culture, so they bring it more into the class and share it and use it.

My Singapore experience has reaffirmed my commitment to addressing cultural issues and to knowing more, so that in my class there is a range of cultural capital which we can use to think about things. If students see that you value their culture they are more confident about sharing their culture.

I do use some Singaporean short stories now in the class and several students have used them in their NCEA assessments” (Rachel).



“We have taken things from North Vista into Te Puke, for example the emphasis on values and teaching them consistently so that all the students in the school are ‘on the same page’. This is something we are going to work on more next year.

The visit has made a difference in my teaching. I am consciously more inclusive, and I am able to use real examples from Singapore in my content.

I think it also has had an effect on the relationships I have with students, including those who are not pakeha” (Chris).

“We do get great PD from it as well. There is value for staff. We can see what a different school system is like, listen to what their conditions are like, what they have to do. We also take one of our lessons in their context. It’s good” (Dave Crone, deputy principal, 2007 trip).

“I think the programme has helped in creating more staff awareness of different cultures. This has helped to increase the profile of our own migrant and international students. Staff are becoming more attentive to their needs. Combined with other professional learning the twinning programme really helps” (Caroline Stevenson, director of international students and ESOL teacher).

WHAT THE TWINNING PROGRAMME OFFERS OUR STUDENTS

“We have more international students in the school now, and the kids who went on the trip have become more aware of them, and what their needs are, as a result of the trip. They do interact with them more.

I think that the students who go on the trip are much more aware of how New Zealand can learn from and gain from contact with Asia. They are probably not aware before they go about what huge contrasts there are within Asia itself” (Lizzie, Drama teacher, 2009 trip).



“I have seen the students who go on the trip, especially a year or two later, reflect on the experience and become aware of things beyond Te Puke and New Zealand. Some do become more globally aware and think larger” (Rachel).

For our students, contact with Asia is a new experience and the culture is new to them. The kids themselves have always however got on very well, finding common ground quickly. They make quite major and close relationships in the short time” (Chris).

“The trip to Malaysia is an initiative that we took, the reason is to get a contrasting view from Singapore about what Asia is like. The armed guards, the border crossing, the poverty, the basic way of living, as well as the jungle and the great natural beauty, it really adds something to the students’ experience of how diverse Asia is” (Chris and Dave).

“Singapore demonstrates the way a multicultural society can really work well. We can learn a lot from that. Everyone is treated well, and the different mother tongues and cultures are properly represented and respected. The society also demonstrates the value that they have put on education. The families really arrange their lives round making sure that children get a good education. All these things are good for our kids to experience” (Chris).

TE PUKE STUDENTS

My Mum said that when I got back all I could do was talk about Singapore – the music, the food, and the different people we met. We did lots of educational things as well. But I probably got more from the cultural side. I learnt and experienced the food, the languages. I just took it all in. It was so good!" (Laura).

"Having the North Vista students come here as well does involve a bigger group of our students. Hopefully it gives more people a chance to experience another culture. It does get people thinking" (Dylan, student on the 2007 trip).

Yes, we have noticed people coming up and talking to the Singaporean students, and asking them questions" (Zara and Tupaea, 2009 trip).

"I think that once you have been immersed in another culture you do understand that how they are is part of their culture. You realise that it is not them being weird or anything. It is just that that is what they do and how they are" (Jo, student on the 2008 trip).

"Sometimes with our Indian students I think that part of the problem is a language barrier. But having been in Singapore it made me realise that everyone speaks at least two languages, if not more, so it is not strange. And you realise that older members of the community don't speak as much English and that is how it is, like some of the Indian families here" (Dylan and Jo).

I think we gained a lot of independence, which is maybe why a lot of us do become school leaders when we come back. I think it helped us develop different ways of looking at things and people, and we don't judge people as much. I think we also develop strong relationships with the staff who go with us, and that helps how we interact with them as school leaders" (Dylan is head boy in 2009, and Jo will be head girl in 2010.)

The trip makes a big impact on you. As time goes by you seem to reflect on it more and more. Most of us have retained friendships with our Singaporean friends. We also develop some different friendships when we get back, for example I now have a Chinese friend and I realise more about what her experience is" (Tupaea).

"I realised by going to Singapore that you don't get much from the visit or another group of people unless you try. I realised that I hadn't made that sort of effort with our Indian students and coming back I realised that more, and that I needed to acknowledge more what their experiences here are like" (Zara).



FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Planning for the future development of the twinning programme goes on regularly. Among the aspects that the school wants to work on are:

- making more of the reporting back to the school by those who go on the trip, so that the impact of the programme is more broadly disseminated
- broadening the number of staff who go with the students, so that over time all the people who want to experience it are able to do so
- making sure that the timing and the programme are balanced so that everyone has time to gain maximum benefit from the trip
- working on ways to make more use of the trip in terms of developing our curriculum and preparing the students to get the most from it
- developing the partnership with Kuaka to ensure the care and preparation for the trips are maintained
- considering how best to organise the fundraising for the trip to sustain it for future year groups
- making the most of the exchange between the two schools and their teachers so that for both schools the professional learning opportunities are maximised
- maintaining the communication with our school and town community so that they are aware of the aims and the outcomes of the trip.

"I noticed that the Singaporean students have a greater global awareness. They are encouraged to do that by their government. We could learn from that and make even more of the visit for our students.

I think the value of our trip is that it is educational, it is done at a young age, it involves staying with Singaporean families, it is safe for them and well monitored. So it gives them that first taste and entry to another world, different from what they are familiar with and starts to open their eyes to what is possible. From that perspective it is really good and challenges their thinking. Some of the students have talked about returning to study and work in Singapore" (Rachel).

EDUCATING FOR ASIA CASE STUDIES: SERIES ONE

As the fastest growing region in the world, Asia will play a major part in global affairs in the 21st century. Asian communities in New Zealand are thriving and expected to represent 15 percent of New Zealand population by 2021. Fostering Asia awareness in the next generation of New Zealanders will equip them with knowledge and skills that they can put to use as good citizens, able professionals and keen advocates of New Zealand's interests in a world increasingly shaped by interactions with Asia.

Asia awareness begins in the early school years and Asia:NZ's education programme strives to promote Asia learning in the curriculum. By commissioning this series of eight case studies on Asia Aware schools, Asia:NZ wants to highlight participating schools' progress so far and to encourage other educators to lead Asia learning in their school and community.

Asia:NZ gratefully acknowledges the participation of staff and students from Te Puke High School in this case study, which was conducted in March 2010.

Visit the school website at <http://www.tepuke.school.nz>

For more information, resources or opportunities related to Asia awareness, make sure you explore the Educating for Asia section of Asia:NZ Online at <http://www.asianz.org.nz>

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