

Enterprising minds



THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT IS ALIVE AND WELL AT OPOTIKI COLLEGE, REPORTS KERRY MITCHELL

For a school that doesn't specifically offer business studies, Opotiki College in the Bay of Plenty has enjoyed plenty of success in the Lion Foundation Young Enterprise Scheme National Awards in recent years.

Last year the school won Company of the Year and received the ASB Award for Financial Management for its New Zealand-themed, trivial pursuit-style board game 'All Around Aotearoa'.

In 2008 it won the Te Puni Kokiri Award for Best Māori Company and the Quicken Award for Most Profitable Company with its Māori cookbook Kai from the Coast.

Year 12 students at the school take part in the Young Enterprise Scheme as an extracurricular activity offered by digital technology teacher Marion Holloway.

Last year's group of seven students spent the best part of the first term researching and deciding on their product before presenting to the school's senior management team.

They were actually discouraged from taking on the board game project as it was considered too difficult and time-consuming.

"We couldn't talk them out of it – they had their heart set on doing the board game and that's the secret," says Marion. "They have to have something that everyone feels passionate about doing otherwise it is difficult to sustain the momentum throughout the year."

The hardest task for the group was getting their start-up capital together. In their decile 1 community they struggled to raise the money needed to produce just 100 games.

They made it work by having barbecues, delivering telephone books, negotiating a repayment plan with their printer and selling advertising spots on the game board to tourism operators and local sponsors.

The first 100 games sold in just six weeks. Reinvesting their profits, the students did a second print run of 400 games, one third of which had been pre-ordered for Christmas.

Marion says the group was delighted with their business success and award. "I don't think they ever dreamed they could get first, but I know how hard they worked."

The school has no immediate plans to offer business studies, but will continue to offer the Young Enterprise Scheme for students who are interested.

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Young Enterprise Scheme: www.enzt.co.nz