

Going offline begins students' journey of discovery

Students at Kingslea School can't access the internet. So, when teachers wanted to use the new Mātauranga online learning platform, some creative thinking was required. Enter Sir Ian Taylor and his team, who came to the rescue with a way to use their resource that no one had anticipated ... an offline version.

'Digital divide'. It's an expression that you'll be familiar with, meaning the gap between those who have ready access to computers and the internet, and those who do not.

Located across seven sites throughout the country, Kingslea is not like any other school in New Zealand. Here teachers and students face a digital divide with a difference, it's deliberate.

"We're a special, composite, decile one, state school delivering education to children and young people who come to us for Care and Protection and/or Youth Justice related issues," explained Deputy Principal Jackie Freeman. "This means they are very restricted in what they can access online."

And that's a challenge for the school's teachers who want to use online resources.

"Some of our teachers had seen Mātauranga and it seemed such a shame that we couldn't access it."

Making it happen

ImpactED's Arnika Macphail works with Kingslea School at Te Puna Wai o Tuhinapo in Christchurch. While discussing with Jackie and Assistant Principal Gordie Palmer ways to access rich learning materials they identified Mātauranga as a great way to make digital technologies learning come alive for students. And she had an idea.

"I know Ian and his Taylormade Media team were wanting to engage ākongā in their resource and make it as equitable as possible, so I reached out to them to see if there was anything they could do.

"They were so obliging and wanted to get involved straight away."

Not long after, Jackie received an email from Tess Whelan, Project Manager for Mātauranga at Taylormade Media.

"She said they wanted to make the resource available to the school and



would be happy to work with us to make it happen."

Powerful connections

The wheels were now in motion. Tess brought in her web developer, Terry Perkins, who was soon working on the problem.

"Essentially, I asked Terry if it was possible to create an offline version and the next thing I knew, while we were all working from home in lockdown, he'd done it!" said Tess. "Then it was just a matter of collaborating the school's service provider with SmartNet to figure out how to load it into the school's servers.

"We ended up creating a full offline version. We had to strip out some of the links but, essentially, it navigates the same way as the website. It's all working well. The school's very pleased."

In fact, despite this all happening at the start of the latest lockdown, it took next to no time at all.

"It really was a case of our IT guy getting together with their IT guy ... and it was up and running across the school, all

seven campuses, within 24 hours!" recalled Jackie.

"This is just an amazing learning resource. We all came here through the power of navigation and it will open up so many possibilities for our students. Many are Māori and Pasifika, and there are going to be some powerful connections with this platform. A lot don't know about their whānau history. This is going to be a great starting point and a chance for them to learn."

Keep it simple

Although the decision – and the process – to take Mātauranga offline was relatively straightforward, it just wasn't something that had previously been considered.

"The original idea was to keep it simple," said Sir Ian Taylor. "But by that we meant we'd designed it so that all anyone needed to use it was an internet connection and a screen. We'd not thought about the constraint of not having a connection.

"I'm really impressed with everyone involved. When I spoke to Terry, he was pleased as punch that this had been made to work. The exciting thing is that it

opens so many opportunities for other people who need it delivered like this.”

Tess agreed and invited other schools to contact her if they were interested in exploring an offline version of the Mātauranga site.

“We always intended for it to be available to anyone and everyone. It’s neat to have people that look at the problem and find a way to make it work. What’s been created is relatively timeless and won’t need any changes.

“Now that we’ve done it once, we’d be happy to supply to other schools.”

Life changing

The work of the Taylormade Media team and the successful outcome has impressed many.

“I’m excited to see kaiako at Kingslea School embracing a resource such as Mātauranga and bringing it to life,” said Coralanne Child, Director of Education Canterbury and Chatham Islands. “Sir Ian’s gift of Mātauranga to schools, in order to tell the untold stories of migration and then sharing that mahi with kaiako, is an amazing resource.”

But, then again, was the end result ever really in doubt?

“I wasn’t surprised that it all came together, as I know they are so dedicated to being awesome and ākonga having access,” added Arnika. “However, I was extremely grateful that they made the time for this to happen so quickly, and for a small number of ākonga. The mahi they do is certainly about each individual having access, rather than it having to be a numbers game of how many it impacts.

“The benefit of everyone within Kingslea having access could potentially be life changing, and they could see that potential. It also meant the kaiako from Kingslea could engage and provide learning opportunities around the stories, which they would have never had access to be able to do. They were super grateful for this, as digital technology resourcing can be quite restricting for them, although they do an amazing job with what they have.”

If you’d like to find out more about the offline version of Mātauranga contact tess@taylormade.co.nz



More on the Mātauranga Online Learning Platform

Free to all schools, Mātauranga seeks to help students learn about the Polynesian migration across the Pacific 1000s of years ago and inspire them to recognise the STEM intellect of these early voyagers.

The team behind the project include film producer Anna Marbrook, waka voyager Noeoe Barclay-Kerr, IT businessman Dennis Chapman, and Sir Ian Taylor.

“The stories are designed to inspire further discussions around STEM and Mātauranga,” said Ian. “My ancestors were part of the greatest human adventure story of all time, and I’d never heard it before. Polynesian navigators on state-of-the-art waka crossed the Pacific Ocean guided only by their kinship with the natural world. These extraordinary engineers, scientists, and mathematicians created the paving stones upon which we stand today.”

Each story page has its own ‘Things To Do’ section with activities and additional content. There are also related ‘Teacher Resource’ that include extension exercises, instructions for simple experiments and PDF templates, and videos.

“Have fun with these learning resources,” added Ian, “and good luck incorporating them into your own stories in the classroom.”

You and your students can jump aboard the journeys at maatauranga.co.nz



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