

“Why can’t PE be like this?”

Reflections and learnings from Active As about how to engage less active rangatahi in physical activity

Celia Fleck, Sport NZ



What is Active As?

Check out this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6f5hR4tOD8>

Or visit our webpage for more information:

<https://sportnz.org.nz/active-as/about-active-as/>

Active As Outcomes



Wellbeing of rangatahi is enhanced through physical activity.



Increased physical activity levels of rangatahi.
Improved physical activity experiences of rangatahi (particularly those missing out).



Educational outcomes are positively impacted through physical activity.

Active As

Active As

Schools and wharekura



What we know



Physical activity has a **positive impact** on the physical and mental wellbeing of rangatahi



Research shows that physical activity drops by **46 percent** in teenage years



Active rangatahi are more **engaged in learning** and achieve better outcomes in and outside of the classroom



Two-thirds of rangatahi would like to be more active than they currently are

Active As

Positive impact against short term outcomes

- Satisfaction with physical activity at school is **87%** (2% increase)
- 46% of rangatahi are active more than 4 days a week - **4.5% increase compared to 2023**
- **The least active group has reduced by 5.5%**
- **61% say physical activities offered reflect my culture** (from 59%)

Active As

Comparison with other schools participating in Voice of Rangatahi (VoR)

Between 2023 and 2024 other schools increased the percentage of active rangatahi by 1.6% (compared with 4.5% for Active As schools)

Rangatahi wanting to do more physical activity in/for school reduced significantly for Active As schools (by 3%) and remained unchanged for other schools. This suggests that at least some of the demand for 'more' has been met in Active as schools.

Active As



Whai wāhitanga

Acknowledging mana, whai wāhitanga recognises young people as valued contributors to society, giving them space to participate, assume agency and take responsibility



What have we learnt about engaging less active rangatahi in physical activity?

- Create inclusive environments
- Remove the pressure
- Prioritise connection
- Respond to feedback
- Be consistent
- Ensure a range of opportunities

Active As



Creating inclusive environments

Ensuring there are opportunities that enhance the mana of all students reinforces the message that physical activity is for everyone, not just those who excel in traditional sports settings.

- Celebrating cultural inclusiveness
- Providing safe spaces

“Providing areas where students feel comfortable and not judged, such as enclosed spaces for lunchtime activities, has been effective. This reduces the pressure of spectators and encourages participation.”



Remove the pressure

By prioritising fun, enjoyment, and inclusivity and providing non-competitive options, physical activity is more appealing and accessible to all students.

“When we offered less traditional activities the less active students came and participated more often as they said they did not feel as threatened because no one really knew what they were doing - like at Golf and Archery and also pickleball.”

“Non-competitive and fun based activities have also been appealing. Eliminating prior experience and having different challenges for different abilities has enabled more students to experience success pertinent to them - it’s been a great equaliser.”

- Emphasising fun through creative activities, such as juggling and dance, keeps students engaged and motivated.



Prioritise connection

By integrating social elements, physical activity becomes a more appealing experience for all.

*“One of my favourite things at school is the Wednesday morning badminton sessions in the gym before class. It’s such a fun way to start the day, and I love playing with my friends. The gym is the perfect place for it, and it’s nice to do something active before school even starts. **It’s not just about getting moving, but also about hanging out with friends and having fun.**”*



Be flexible and willing to adjust to the insights from rangatahi

*“Our Active As student committee would approach and ask rangatahi sitting down (i.e. inactive students) at lunchtimes “what would get you active?” Students being able to answer this question in small groups (or alone) has **helped us to hear what our less active rangatahi would like** and consequently we can plan accordingly.”*

- Promoting initiatives where students see their input reflected in the design of physical activity opportunities fosters a sense of ownership and inclusivity.
- Personally encouraging and inviting individual rangatahi to participate in activities can boost their confidence and willingness to engage.



Be consistent

Gradual, intentional, responsive, and consistent approaches are key to promoting sustained participation in physical activity for all students.

- For some students, involvement in organising and managing activities is an entry point to physical activity. This allows them to contribute in ways that align with their interests and slowly build up their confidence and comfort levels to try physical activity experiences themselves.

*"I hate sports. I didn't want to come at first because I thought it was just sports. But **when I realised there would be singing, I came and ended up enjoying some sports too.** It was fun, a win-win."*



Additional info:

Contact me:

Celia Fleck, Sport NZ

Celia.fleck@sportnz.org.nz

Active Bodies, Active Minds report

If you are in a position of needing to advocate for physical education and/or physical activity in your school or kura this is an excellent document that can be found on this webpage:

<https://sportnz.org.nz/resources/active-bodies-active-minds/>

Active As

