

Bay of Islands College

Programmes empower students to give back to the community

Start small, dream big may as well be the motto of the Building Academy at the Bay of Islands College (BOIC).



Students cut logs as part of a forestry course. Photo credit: Bay of Islands College

“We want our students to know that there are many paths to success, and to challenge the perception that going to university is the only valuable pathway for students to be successful.”

**KAMLESH PRAKASH,
DEPUTY PRINCIPAL AT
BAY OF ISLANDS COLLEGE**

Established in 2022, the Building Academy has been generating quite a buzz about teen spirit after students completed a number of projects that support Te Tai Tokerau community. Two of these projects involved repairs at the local RSA (Royal New Zealand Returned and Services’ Association) office and fixing the community kindergarten and playground. Students have also repaired fences, stairs and decks for older residents who cannot afford to hire professionals. On campus, they have built a storage facility for PE equipment, a retaining wall around the school, concrete footpaths, and a garage for the school van.

“Through these various projects, our students have been able to gain valuable skills. But perhaps more importantly, the building academy has empowered them to strengthen links and actively make a difference in the community,” said Mr Kamlesh Prakash, Deputy Principal at BOIC.

The school’s long-term goal is to give students an opportunity to build cabins and two- or three-bedroom houses for local whānau.

For now, Mr Prakash said the school was on the lookout for opportunities that would enable students to gain hands-on experience in carpentry, plumbing, electrical work and painting as well as give back to the community.

The Building Academy, which is funded through the Tai Tokerau Trades Academy, is one of many recent additions to the broad curriculum offered by BOIC.

To ensure students get a good, well-rounded education, BOIC has broadened its programme offerings to include courses in financial literacy, legal studies, agriculture and

horticulture, engineering technology, and robotics as well as training in beekeeping, becoming a barista, hospitality and catering, writing a CV and preparing for a job interview. In Arataki, a course run by a former New Zealand Army soldier, students build their skills in leadership, resilience, discipline, and teamwork.

Since 2019, Tuesdays have been designated a “Project Day” to enable students from Year 11 to Year 13 to gain extended exposure to various industries. The Gateway programme supports this by integrating structured workplace learning with school-based learning.

Through a memorandum of understanding with BCITO Te Pūkenga, which provides apprenticeships and supervisor qualifications for the New Zealand building and construction industry, BOIC students can gain credits through BCATS (Building, Construction and Allied Trades Skills) that contribute towards attaining NCEA.

The school has also linked up with some local businesses so students can gain insights into what different industries offer in terms of careers as well as opportunities for apprenticeships or on-the-job training. This is one of many ways that BOIC is working to achieve NELP Priority 7 – “Collaborate with industries and employers to ensure learners/ ākonga have the skills, knowledge and pathways to succeed in work.”

“We want our students to know that there are many paths to success, and to challenge the perception that going to university is the only valuable pathway for students to be successful. Vocational pathways are just as valuable as tertiary education. The experiences these students are being exposed to will give them practical skills for life,” Mr Prakash said.

The broad course offerings align with the economic profile of Northland. Although underpinned by primary production and manufacturing, the region’s high-performing sectors include pastoral farming and processing, horticulture and tourism.

“Many of our students will seek jobs in the primary sector so offering a programme that encourages further growth and study in this industry makes huge sense,” Mr Prakash said.



Students from the Building Academy built a retaining wall around the school. Photo credit: Bay of Islands College

Introducing more learning options that empower learners and connect them with the world of work has also boosted enrolment figures as well as student engagement and attendance, said Mr Chris Serfontein, Head of the Technology Department at BOIC.

“When I started here in 2016, we had only around 350 students on our roll. That has since increased to almost 500,” he said.

Parents have also been very supportive of the school’s approach. “One of them told me how their son was ready to leave school but has now found his passion in building and carpentry. She doesn’t have to get him out of bed as she used to. Her son is keen and enthusiastic to go to school because he wants to, not because he has to,” Building Academy Tutor Jason Tane said.

Student motivation is high and has led to more students staying until Year 13, according to Mr Tane.

“It’s great to see our students gaining more self-esteem and walking tall as they learn new skills. As a school, it is our role to provide all students with opportunities to learn skills that can lead to successful careers.”

For more
information

<https://ncea.education.govt.nz/pathways>

