

## ***Case Study:***

# ***Embedding HERA at Mt Roskill Grammar School***

HERA - Everyday Goddess (HERA) celebrates and encourages girls to be physically active. It's about understanding what young women enjoy and empowering them to explore new activities.

Mt Roskill Grammar School introduced HERA in 2018 by collaborating with teachers, students, Sport Auckland and Aktive – Auckland Sport & Recreation (Aktive). It was so successful that the school is looking to continue the programme in 2019.

The purpose of introducing HERA at Mt Roskill Grammar School was to provide opportunities for girls in years 9 – 13 to get active and make connections through activities that interested them. By utilising a participant led approach, the HERA team was able to deliver exactly what the girls desired, resulting in increased involvement and commitment to the programme.

In an initial brainstorming session, participants identified Taekwondo as the most popular activity they wish to try. Following their suggestions, Sport Auckland and Aktive connected the school with Taekwondo New Zealand who delivered free sessions at the school on a casual basis. Additionally, Tony Martin from Tony Martin's Gym offered significantly discounted membership rates and provided basic strength programmes.

This valuable support enabled the cost of activities to be subsidised, encouraging greater participation.

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### ***Goal/Objective***

The primary goal of HERA at Mt Roskill was to encourage high school girls to participate in physical activity to improve their health, confidence and social connections.

HERA was particularly targeted at individuals who were less active and/or required greater self-assurance or competence to participate in physical activity.

The activities offered were directed by the girls with help from a passionate teacher who led HERA at the school, and the Sport Auckland Regional Sports Director.

To ensure the programme was participant centred, classroom sessions were designed to give students a voice and encourage feedback from the group.



## ***Barriers/Challenges***

1. Parental permission
  - a. The gym was outside school boundaries and the activities took place outside school hours, parental consent was required for students to attend. This resulted in lower than expected numbers at the gym.
2. Exam time
  - a. There was a drop off in attendance during exam season.
3. Ensuring the programme was participant driven
  - a. The HERA team remained mindful of not setting the agenda by asking the girls to communicate their needs.
4. Determining what activities to pursue
5. Administering the programme to maximise impact

## ***Solutions***

1. Earlier communication for permission slips could have improved participant numbers.
2. Increased communication and support during high stress times could help girls to balance sessions with study.
3. The HERA team created a safe and relaxed environment where the girls could share their ideas via various channels that included verbal and written on a white board or post-it notes. Questions were frequently asked to determine what the girls wanted to participate in and understand any potential challenges or barriers to participation.
4. Discussion took place to understand what activities were available in the local community and whether the girls were interested in trying any of them. The girls ranked their ideas in terms of importance to help decide where to focus first.
5. The Regional Sports Trust (in this case, Sport Auckland) and HERA team connected with local groups identified by the girls, provided a connection point and arranged engagement between the school and that organisation. The HERA teacher lead became the contact point for the self-defence sessions and engaged with the girls to arrange suitable times and an appropriate venue.



## ***What we learned***

- Build rapport and listen to the students. Taking the time to understand what the girls wanted and why helped to sustain momentum.
- A teacher lead is imperative to the success of initiating HERA. The teacher helped to efficiently communicate between school administration, parents, students and sporting trusts.
- Teacher and coach approachability are essential. Identifying people who can relate well to the girls helps to make a genuine impact.
- Introducing sessions focused on how to balance physical activity with responsibilities could be beneficial. It is important that students understand the importance of adapting physical activity to accommodate other commitments such as exams and family expectations. Students who can continue being physically active during times of high stress are more likely to continue this behaviour later in life.
- Having the school commit to HERA helps increase numbers. HERA was advertised via the daily notices, by word of mouth and freebies given out at the first meetings to encourage students.



**Sarah Singh, Teacher in Charge, Mt Roskill Grammar School**

*"There were quite a lot of new faces at Taekwondo as I changed the way I advertised it in the notices this week so am thinking perhaps we could just take the next activity on the original list and push it through the notices, opening it up again to all students beyond just the original kids that signed up for HERA"*

**Year 11 Student, Mt Roskill Grammar School**

*"I went to Taekwondo again this week and we broke some boards!"*



## ***Other facts***

- Having a student drive the programme provided invaluable insights into what the girls liked and disliked. Additionally, that student was an authentic ambassador for the project.
- HERA administrators challenged the girls to invite others outside of their friend circles to try the sessions.
- Mt Roskill Grammar School secured funding and support from HERA and Tony Martin that substantially reduced the cost of activities. As a result, a gym membership was offered to the girls for \$5.00 per week.
- A Facebook messenger chat was used to communicate with the teacher in charge, Sport Auckland Regional Sport Director and student ambassador.
- Sessions were delivered semi-regularly based on the students' availability (approximately 1-2x per fortnight).
- There were 45 different activities identified in the initial brainstorm. These activities were further segmented into groups, with self-defence based activities a clear favourite.

***Get in touch with Aktive to learn more about how to introduce a HERA programme***

[enquires@aktive.org.nz](mailto:enquires@aktive.org.nz)

