

WĀNANGA AKO & LEARNING AT RSHS - FAQ's

WHY IS THE LEARNING STRUCTURE AT RSHS SO DIFFERENT TO OTHER SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL EXPERIENCES?

Where RSHS is similar is in the focus on quality experiences leading to meaningful qualifications and pathways. We have a strong focus on NCEA attainment, pathways access and success. Where we differ is that the Ministry of Education purposefully designed RSHS to be an innovative learning environment that is future focused. That means we purposefully design learning that ensures students are prepared for an unknown future of work and the ever changing world around them. Whilst what we do may look and feel different to other more traditional schools, the outcomes will always be the same; personal success for every student. We choose to provide students with the skills and capabilities to manage their own learning journey and develop the skills for lifelong learning. Our structures are designed to ensure that students have power and agency and that teachers are not making all of the decisions for them.

“Traditional classrooms ‘arranged into rows and columns of tables or chairs facing a blackboard with the teacher’s desk in front of the classroom’ (Sztejnberg & Finch, 2006) were originally designed to shape behaviour in ways that worked for traditional teacher centred instruction. The uniqueness of each individual includes different strengths and talents they bring to learning, and remind us that the physical environment can play a role in unlocking and extending those strengths. When designing and implementing learning environments, research tells us that we should ‘accommodate variability among learners from the outset’ (Gronneberg & Johnston, 2015).”

HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY CHILD WITH THEIR LEARNING JOURNEY?

We encourage students to be collaborative, strength-based, reflective and resilient problem-solvers. At times, this can feel or look as though your child may be struggling. This is what schools would describe as the “learning pit”. Students who work through these challenges and take ownership of the solutions for their success are more likely to become functioning and able adults when they leave High School at the end of the 3 year journey. Supporting your child to manage their own workload, to support your child to discuss directly with their teacher/s to negotiate a learning need or allowing your child to fail forward are ways you can support your child. Keeping communication open with your child’s kaiarahi can provide you with peace of mind also e.g. a quick check-in.

“Learning occurs when you step out of your comfort zone. And yet, many people are hesitant to take this step for fear of making mistakes or revealing their weaknesses. That’s when the Learning Pit can help: to encourage and reassure learners that taking risks, asking questions, and trying new things can help them develop their abilities and deepen their understanding.” James Nottingham (2007)

IS WĀNANGA AKO A ‘FREE-FOR-ALL’ LEARNING EXPERIENCE?

No. Learning is specifically designed to meet the needs of each and every learner. This means our learning structures need to be flexible and robust. **All students have different learning needs, therefore a “one size fits all” model is not adequate and we operate a “one size fits one” model of learning.** The Wānanga Ako model of learning is purposefully designed to ensure that all students can see themselves in learning, have appropriate structures set up to support their individual learning journey, and to allow for as much personalisation of learning schedules (timetables) and experiences as possible. The Wānanga Ako experience is mapped and deliberately designed around the New Zealand Curriculum, NCEA and pathways enabling successes for all students.

“When learners have the power to be active in making decisions about their learning, intrinsic motivation, creativity, higher-order thinking and overall achievement tend to increase (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). [Learning] environments should be designed in ways that allow students to develop their ability to make choices, access a range of environments and be active participants in their learning (Elmore, 2016).”

WILL ALL SUBJECTS BE OFFERED IN ALL WĀNANGA AKO?

Yes. In the case where there are only a very small number of students wishing to participate in a particular subject within a Wānanga Ako, we will look to combine these students from across the school.

WILL MY CHILD BE LEARNING WITH ALL OTHER YEAR LEVELS?

In Semester 1, Year 11 students will be in a separate learning programme from Year 12 & 13 students. Year 12 & 13 students will be in mixed level classes. Semester 2 will see all year levels working together on programmes designed for their specific qualification.

WHEN CAN MY CHILD START NCEA LEVEL 3?

Our qualifications can be started whenever a student is ready. Some are ready more quickly than others, whilst others need more time. Either way is fine so long as the student is experiencing their version of success. If your child is ready to start their next highest qualification e.g. they have all completed Level 2, then they will be able to start accessing Level 3 standards. This is by negotiation with the teachers to ensure we are setting students up for success. Students will be unable to move onto their next highest qualification without having developed the necessary building blocks of learning required to move.

MY CHILD IS IN YEAR 13. WILL THEY STILL BE ABLE TO DO UE SUBJECTS FOR A UNIVERSITY PATHWAY?

Yes. However, 32% of all students nationwide go on to University study. The other 70% transition into trades training, employment or other tertiary study options. Therefore, our programmes of learning are designed to enable both the 30% of Senior High students transitioning to University study and the 70% of students transitioning into other pathways have equal chances for success.

WHAT IF I FINISH MY LEVEL 3 QUALIFICATION EARLY?

We offer a range of opportunities beyond NCEA Level 3, including NZ Scholarship and a wide range of Pathways opportunities. Some of these opportunities may include University papers, work experiences, internships and personalised learning schedules.

WILL THERE BE YEAR 13 ONLY COURSES?

All courses are level based and will have a mix of students. For example, some students are ready for NCEA Level 3 before others therefore those that are ready, according to their teachers, may choose to participate in a higher level course.

CAN MY CHILD PARTICIPATE IN SINGLE SUBJECT LEARNING EXPERIENCES?

Most of our programmes are designed to be co-taught. Research shows that when subjects are taught in conjunction with each other that we are aligning more with what happens in the real world; thus better preparing our students. As well as, the cognitive functioning required is much higher. However, there are still subjects that can and will be taught in isolation. These will be presented to the students as options and will be negotiated with the staff where appropriate.

“Spaces that facilitate and encourage collaborative teaching...lead to more effective teaching and improved student outcomes (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). Environments should be designed in ways that allow students to develop their ability to make choices, access a range of environments and be active participants in their learning (Elmore 2016).”

HOW MUCH SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING (SDL) TIME SHOULD MY CHILD BE DOING?

Self-Directed Learning (SDL) is a negotiated experience. Our expectation is that students will have no more than 90 min of SDL a week. If your child requires more or less SDL, this can be negotiated and agreed upon between you and your child's Kaiārahi.

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO CONNECT WITH THE SCHOOL ABOUT MY CHILD'S LEARNING?

Your child's Kaiārahi is the advocate for their success at RSHS. Your child's Kaiārahi will know your child's passions, interests and academic goals. It is best to communicate directly with your kaiarahi in the first instance.