



Collaborate, Innovate, Illuminate


Among the mountains of Arrowtown Primary School in New Zealand, where skiing is imbedded in the Phys-Ed curriculum, grade 7 and 8 teachers designed a unique challenge to ignite student passion and integrate science, English, digital, and the arts. With local businesses, a clothing designer and the national ski team as partners, the teachers challenged the students to design, prototype, present and market an illuminated safety ski suit that could be worn at night.

Students researched the science of light and used digital platforms such as Pixir Editor and Tinker cad for their planning. Students developed the six Global competencies and used the self-assessment tool to reflect and consider their strengths and next steps. They presented their designs to each other and provided meaningful feedback during the process. A culminating evening community-wide competition was held where students paraded their suits down the slopes as their peers described the design over the sound system.

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To ensure the project was a success, the teachers clarified roles. Each student took on roles that matched their strengths, such as project leader, designer, craftsperson, lighting technician. This encouraged student engagement and generated mutual respect of each other. As one student said, "I enjoyed working in a team. My role was craftsmanship. I helped build and craft the suit and brought some ideas to the table. Everyone in the team was working well together. There were good leaders in the team."

The Illuminate project exceeded the teachers' expectations. They did not anticipate all the outcomes that would be achieved, particularly around student agency and the relationships that were formed. They report, "We think that the resilience and confidence that students have developed through Illuminate is spilling over into other learning areas with the majority of our senior students tracking really well in reading,



writing and maths. They are transferring their positive mind-sets and enthusiasm from Illuminate into other areas of school life.” As the saying goes: Good at learning. Good at life.

The teachers at Arrowtown learned a lot from the experience and have some solid advice for those looking to initiate a deep learning design. They say, “Trusting our students and relinquishing control was essential to the success of Illuminate. We wanted our students to be active participants in their learning and have the power to act and make decisions. This meant that we didn’t always know what direction the learning would take. Sometimes it got chaotic. We had to trust our learners and continually revisit our project criteria to keep things on track. In the end, the students stepped up, dealt with the problems as they arose, and met their deadlines. They did an incredible job!” And this, may be their most important recommendation: “You lead and guide but you must also be prepared to be led and guided in turn.”

This is yet another example of the ways Deep Learning can be illuminating for everyone

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