

Hard-working class at Maraenui Bilingual School win ASICS sports shoes

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Students from room 9 at Maraenui Bilingual School showing off their new ASICS shoes they won as part of the Zespri Young and Healthy Virtual Adventure.

As part of the Zespri Young and Healthy Virtual Adventure, a Maraenui Bilingual School class has walked so far that they won themselves a new pair of ASICS sports shoes each, including the teacher Leanne Whaitiri, who said her class was “so excited” to learn they had won.

Whaitiri, said, everyone gave big cheers. “They knew they had worked hard and really got into the challenge, and they knew there were prizes, but they did not expect to win shoes for everyone.”

The students put in a lot of hard work, and their teacher said the new shoes had come at a perfect time as they were heading away to school camp and needed decent shoes for the ngāhere walks.

“Winning anything is great, but to win some really good quality shoes is a bonus,” Whaitiri, said.

Zespri Young and Healthy Virtual Adventure is a health and well-being program that benefits more than 20,000 children in New Zealand, each year.

Young and Healthy Virtual Adventure uses an interactive and engaging technology platform to connect with tamariki regardless of their location, taking students on a virtual adventure across the globe.

To personalise their experience, students build their unique avatars, embark on a virtual tourism adventure around the world, and receive motivation and encouragement from some of our most respected sporting figures.



A Maraenui Bilingual School class is enjoying its prize after working hard during the Zespri Young and Healthy Virtual Adventure programme.

The programme aims to encourage tamariki to do the little things that they can choose each day to support their brain and body in doing all of their incredible work.

This includes moving regularly, hydrating with water, swapping leisure screen time for other activities like reading, playing outside with friends, etc., getting a night of good sleep, and eating fruit and vegetables when they have the chance.

The classes would participate in weekly challenges, which would put them in the draw to win a pair of ASICS shoes for each student.

The class students were excited about everything involved with the Zespri Young and Healthy Virtual Adventure.

The teacher said that when the kids first put on their step counters, “they wanted to see how many steps it took them to walk around the akomanga, to the wharepaku, and everywhere else they could.”

The students loved to compare and challenge each other about who did the most, with some students walking or running around the bike track at lunchtime just to increase their steps.

Whaitiri, the class teacher, is also receiving a pair of shoes along with her class. The primary school teacher did the challenge alongside the tamariki.

“We used my steps for the weekend date entries as we kept their step trackers at kura, so we wouldn’t lose them and no one would miss out.

“They were always interested in seeing how many steps I had done in the weekend,” she said.

Part of the challenge also involved what the students ate and drank, how much sugar they consumed in a day, how much sleep they got, and how much screen time they spent in a day.

“This part really made them think,” Whaitiri, said.

During the process, the students became “really good” at making sure they drank enough water during the day, started eating more fruit, and have continued to do so.

“We have I kai in schools, and some of the tamariki who did not really eat the vegetables made an effort to count that when they put their information into their avatar portal,” the teacher said.

Along with walking and learning about nutritional foods, the Maraenui students said they loved learning how to read numbers into the thousands when recording their steps. Which their teacher said was great maths skills for them.

“They also loved the interactive portal and learning about the countries they were walking through,” she said.

When they reached a different country during the virtual adventure, the students used their Chromebooks to learn about that country.

Whaitiri wants to encourage other teachers and students to take part in the ‘Zespri Challenge.’

“There is so much to learn, from reading, writing, maths, health and PE, and Social Sciences. And now we get to win something and write thank-you letters afterwards,” she said.