

## GAMIFICATION

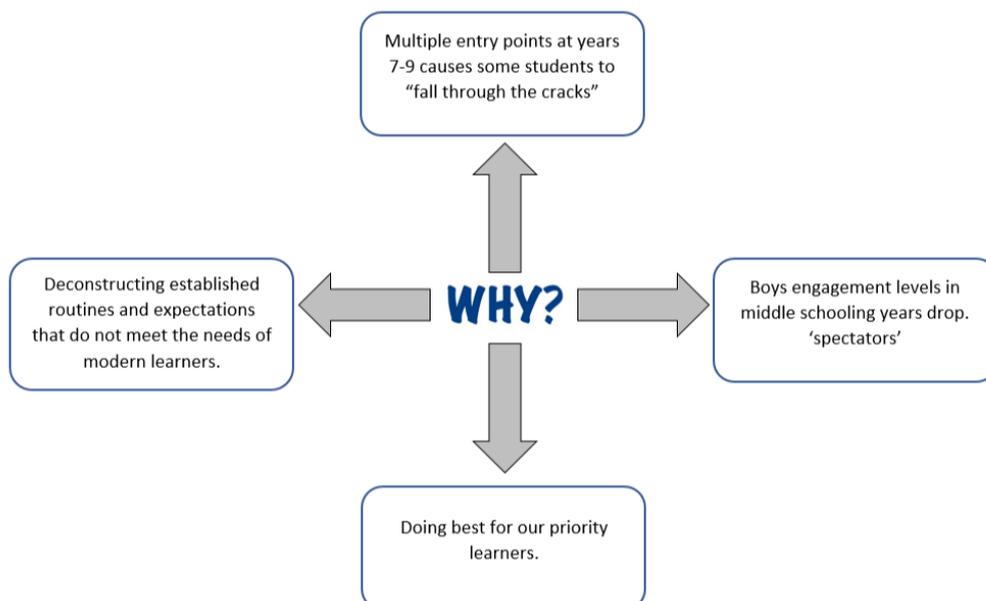
*Aim: to deconstruct existing structures and routines to re-create a 21<sup>st</sup> century curriculum (with a specific focus on engagement and student agency) based on the principals of gamification.*

Our understanding of Gamification is the process of developing motivation and engagement by rewarding students with points/badges for completing set tasks or projects resulting in then earning the right to move onto a new level and complete new tasks to earn rewards for their work. Such as the concept of digital games, moving through levels achieving set criteria to progress to further levels. Students in the classroom will complete and reach certain milestones that is meaningful to them to progress. Our understanding is that students will be able to work at a level that is appropriate to their learning needs and have a very clear understanding of what they need to do to progress and more importantly have a very clear idea of where they stand in terms of their learning progression.

### BACKGROUND:

Since 2013 the Middle School (Years 7 - 9) at St Thomas of Canterbury College has been looking at how to create a curriculum which looks to engage our community of learners and develop life-long skills which will benefit them in the long run.

The most important aspect of the change is our students. Why are we changing the status-quo? What problems need fixing? Below is a diagram which outlines the main reasons driving change.



## 1. Deconstructing the established routines and expectations.

What has been evident previously is that the learning structure of the middle school at St Thomas has been influenced by the senior school and especially the structures and requirements of NCEA. Most teachers in the school are secondary specialists including the junior school. This has led to many issues from engagement to student management issues due to the 10, 11 and 12-year-old boys being taught and treated like senior students. At one stage, many families just used the middle school as a catholic transition school to move on to other secondary schools once year 8 had been completed.

Since the development of a Middle School Leader in 2014 things have moved rapidly to alter this reality. The focus has been thinking how we can develop the pedagogy and curriculum to engage our students with a focus on incorporating BYOD and technology.

Most of what has been driving change has been focussing on the new curriculum, and the opportunities this has opened.

Bolstad, R., & Gilbert, J. (2012). *Supporting future-oriented learning & teaching — a New Zealand perspective*. Wellington: Ministry of Education, has been a document that has driven many of the changes that has taken place in the school and has lead us into researching and actioning the potential to gamifying our junior curriculum.

As it states there needs to be an 'unbundling' of school structures and "a process in which innovators deconstruct established structures and routines and reassemble them in newer, smarter ways" and a move from knowledge as an end point to knowing, doing, being., knowledge as a verb.

To do this we have followed the 6 principles for a 21st century education system as outlined previously.

The gamification of the curriculum, we believe, will enable us to successfully implement a system which deconstructs/unbundles the established structures and constructs a more open, transparent system which enables students to engage and succeed in.

## 2. Boys engagement levels

Most studies show that the levels of student engagement in middle school years drops rapidly, this is even more true for boys and priority learners. Often students are 'spectators' and see little value in these formative years. Developing a curriculum that engages students and gives them multiple opportunities to succeed and progress is crucial.

By gamifying the curriculum and allowing students to get real time feedback and chances to 'level up' leads to cognitive engagement as well as the development of greater intrinsic motivation. "The real power of gamification comes through using it to help learners move from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation. One of the things that drives intrinsic motivation is mastery, or the ability to do something well, and gamification can help learners build mastery through rewarding specific actions" <http://core-ed.org/legacy/thought-leadership/ten-trends/ten-trends-2014/gamification>>. Students come into the curriculum at their level (not in year levels) and see the purpose of completing tasks, "if I master this what is next". Often students who enter the school go into a year group which may not suit their learning needs and lead to disengagement. This is very true of those at year 9 who often have low levels of confidence. By gamifying and developing work based on their interests should lead to;

-Motivation and interest in learning

-Academic self-regulation

-Self efficacy

Gibbs, R., & Poskitt, J. (2010). *Student Engagement in the Middle Years of Schooling (Years 7-10): A Literature Review*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

### 3. Doing best by our Priority Learners

As a school, we have been focused on raising the levels of success for our priority learners. We have been part of the He Kakano and Talanoa projects and have 20% of our students who identify as having learning difficulties. For many, these learners fail in a traditional model of education.

By gamifying the curriculum, they will be able to work at a level that is suited to their needs and create course through 'levelling up' that ensure students have the concepts that will enable them to access learning at higher levels.

### 4. Multiple Entry Points for Years 7-9 Students

One of the most difficult aspects of the established structure is the multiple entry points for students into the school.

In year 7, roughly 55-60 students begin at St Thomas each year. In year 8 approximately 10-15 enrol and in year 9 another 60 students from 19 different intermediate/primary feeder schools arrive to the college. The vast range of prior practices and learning environments means our boys arrive with very diverse levels of ability and thinking skills, especially those arriving in year 9 compared to those Year 7 and 8 students who have already had 2 years immersed in our style of curriculum.

What this also does is widen the gap for our priority learners who enter at Year 9 compared to those priority learners who began in Year 7, especially since we have found that boy's engagement levels in Year 9 tend to be less than those in years 7 and 8.

Of the boys who begin at St Thomas in Year 7/8 and move through to NCEA, 60-75% of those receive academic endorsements which highlights the fact that we need to look for a more innovative approach to learning to allow those who enter later to find success and develop confidence in their learning so that they can find a journey of continued success.

So how will gamifying the curriculum improve this? By allowing students to enter at a suitable learning level rather than a defined year level to enable students to master concepts and ideas earlier compared to playing 'catch up' or worst case scenario becoming disengaged with learning altogether.