



# Sitech Systems N.Z. Ltd

*future proofing learning*

## Schools Take To The Airwaves - some ideas for setting up a radio station: A Sitech Think Sheet

Running a school radio station sounds like it could be expensive and complicated. Not so.



A radio station costs in the region of \$3000 and seems to attract community funding. They are easy to set up. You can buy a kitset and need one dedicated computer to run it. Schools across New Zealand are not just dipping their toes in the water but are pushing boundaries and using radio stations to develop oral literacy, self-esteem, Te Reo and for marketing and fund raising. Here are the stories of three schools who have all taken to the airwaves.

### Merivale School

**"In 15 years of being a Principal it is the best thing that I have ever done."**

Jan Tinetti, Merivale School in Tauranga

Merivale School began to focus on oral language back in 2008.

They thought then that a radio station would be the best way to provide students with an authentic learning context but feared the cost. Almost three years later at the ULearn conference, they stumbled across an affordable kitset and ordered it on the spot. However they kept it under wraps, instead beginning a discussion with the students on how best that they could communicate with their community who had extremely low levels of internet access.

At the time Merivale School was hosting the Ra Whakanga-hau Kapa Haka Festival which coincidentally entailed Moana Communications broadcasting via radio from the school site. The light bulb came on and the students decided that a radio station could improve the links with the community. Lo and behold, the radio station came out of its box.

The students felt that it should form an integral part of the school site, not be located separately, and they identified the library which was set for refurbishment as the prime spot. In the meantime however a cupboard in the staffroom would do! This location proved to have advantages that no one had thought about. Teachers weren't afraid of something that ran out of a cupboard, surely it had to be low-tech and easy to

use.

The radio station Tutarawana-nga FM 107.5 broadcasting for a distance of 2.5kms, has thus evolved in a non-threatening, student centred fashion. The school has gone from having the school song on a loop, through to pre-recorded interviews, to live shows and it is fast becoming the local community's #1 choice on the radio. It is even playing in the local hairdressers.

Benefits are already apparent. Oral language is flourishing. The Principal Jan Tinetti describes how "Levels had been consistently low for some time but are now improving and the only intervention has been the radio station." She adds that "Students who previously lacked self-esteem and self-belief are now brimming with confidence."

George, aged 10 plucked up the courage to knock on Jan Tinetti's door and ask if he could sing on the radio. He was an undiscovered talent whose voice Jan describes as "bringing tears to your eyes". George's reaction to being able to sing on the radio was that "It brings joy to my heart." He has since gone on to sing at a local theatre and talk to a visiting ICT Cluster.

Being able to communicate with an audience that is invisible is proving to be a non-threatening but authentic way for students to develop their oral literacy or performing arts skills.

The under the carpet way in which the radio has been introduced and it is still described as being in the “soft launch stage” has won over both the teachers and students. With minimal effort 80% of the teachers are using the radio as a teaching tool. Talk to the students and they feel that they and their local community own it. Whilst advocating that other schools should have a radio station, they add “but only if they don’t broadcast around here! This is our radio station for our community.”

Students leaving at the end of the year fully intend to continue to tune in to “their radio”. And all this has taken place without it even coming out of the cupboard. Tune in next year to find out what happens when it moves into its own designated space in the library!

### Unleashing Te Reo Maori

Te Akau Ki Papamoa School,  
Papamoa

A radically different but equally successful approach has been taken across the city in Papamoa. Te Akau Ki Papamoa radio station TAKP 107.6 has been located at the front of the administration building, with a neon “On Air” sign that is lit up when broadcasting. The sign, inspired by the students, has been professionally designed and the school hopes to encourage students to take broadcasting seriously by providing as realistic an environment as possible.

Just as having to locate the radio station in the cupboard had unexpected advantages for Merivale, Te Akau Ki Papamoa

found that due to the studio’s prominent position it fast became a marketing tool for the school. Prospective parents are blown away to see the young DJ’s in action through the windows and due to its conspicuous location existing parents were soon tuning in and talking about the radio station in the local community.

Bruce Jepson, Principal genuinely believes that the radio station has been a contributing factor in recent increases in enrolments.



With a 5km broadcasting area the radio station has also attracted the attention of local businesses who are providing the school with gifts such as vouchers for prize giving in return for a mention once a week.

Whilst no one is going to complain about the unexpected marketing and fund raising spin-offs, the real value of the radio station has been in terms of teaching and learning, particularly in Te Reo Maori.

The potential of the radio sta-

tion to support the teaching and learning of Te Reo became apparent during Maori Language Week. Tane Bennett, an experienced teacher of Te Reo put together a series of programmes based around manakitanga, how we look after each other. All classes were to tune in at 1.30pm and each teacher was to act as facilitator, so for example when Tane asked them to draw a T Chart on the board, they drew the T Chart, and then the students would complete the activity as he directed over the radio.

It meant that all the students were accessing authentic live Te Reo. Feedback from staff was that they too were finding it instructional. Such was the popularity of this series of programmes that the design a poster competition got over 200 entries, almost 50% of the school.

From this developed Tane’s Te Reo Hour, when once a week, the whole school tunes in and Tane delivers his fully funded unit to all the classrooms. Initially based on a series of books covering each Unit, the school is now working at embedding the Te Reo hour into the school-wide termly topic. This term the school has been following the Rena Shipwreck, so Tane’s programme has looked at the importance of the island of Motiti and the local legends. Tane describes his experiences with the radio station as the highlight of his mainstream teaching to date and both himself and the Principal are considering the potential to roll the concept or the programmes out into other schools.

### The next step: streaming

Halswell School, Christchurch

Merivale School wants to connect with whanau who may not be located locally. Te Akau Ki Papamoa School wants to share their Te Reo resources

with other schools. They are both looking into “streaming” which means broadcasting over the internet. One cutting edge school, Halswell in Christchurch have recently bitten the bullet and are now broadcasting to the world via the web. Activated 88.3FM began broadcasting in early 2011 but it quickly became apparent that reception was both limited and patchy due to the school’s location. Parents were driving to school to hear the broadcasts!

Teacher Fraser Malins decided to investigate freeware to support streaming. It needed to be reliable and simple and he found that the answer lay in “Icecast”. The school set up a desktop computer running winamp with an icecast plug-in used to exclusively stream the signal to the icecast server then out to the world. Activated 88.3 FM School’s is now streaming live between 2 and 3pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, accessible via their home page [www.halswell.school.nz](http://www.halswell.school.nz).

### The Low Down on Low Power Radio Stations

A school radio station is considered to be Low Power FM broadcasting. It uses a low

amount of energy to broadcast a signal that does not travel very far and is seen as a niche radio station that is focused on the small surrounding community.

Low power FM general user licence requirements are straightforward: the maximum permitted transmission power at the aerial is 1 watt and you need to broadcast your station name and an address or email address every hour. There are a number of permitted frequencies. Frequency use is on a shared basis so you may find that another user could encroach on your signal. Where this has happened with schools, it has generally been resolved through negotiation.

Licensing requirements are not onerous either. In fact the majority of schools will already have the appropriate license: the APRA|AMCOS PPNZ School Music Licence administered by the New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA).

The easiest way to obtain the equipment is through a kitset that comes with labels telling you where to plug what. This will need to include an

FM transmitter and aerial that you will want to locate on the highest point of the school to ensure as wide coverage as possible, generally up to 5km. You will also require at least one computer to run your playlist but you may want an additional one where DJ’s can check emails or blogs for live feedback from their listeners!

### The verdict!

Jan, Principal of Merivale School talked about the ubiquitous nature of the radio station when she recently did her strategic review. The radio station could potentially contribute to everything that the school wanted to achieve. She said, “It is hard to believe that something with so much promise can be so simple.”



## Next steps

For more information on Sitech Systems NZ and our radio station you can:

- **VISIT** the Sitech Showroom
- **DOWNLOAD** the 2015 catalogue from [www.sitech.co.nz/flyers\\_and\\_catalogues](http://www.sitech.co.nz/flyers_and_catalogues)
- **SURF** our website for pricing, quotations or to order
- **DOWNLOAD** a funding template off our website to send to community trusts
- **CONTACT** one of our educational technology consultants at:

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