



Parkour in Education

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Most early childhood education centres have a good thing going for them. An inclusive atmosphere where children have the almost limitless opportunity to explore; themes that include colours, shapes, textures, language, relationships, the environment, animals, play, movement, risk assessment and food, etc. The learning scope is vibrant, positive and engaging. In a warm and encouraging environment, this is where children want to be. Heck, this is where I want to be.

Somewhere along the road from childhood to adulthood, many of us lose the love of learning or at least project the negative experiences of school onto the process of learning. Sitting at a desk all day, taking tests for tests' sake, little time to truly enjoy the company of peers, angry teachers, poor communication and a 'recipe approach' to learning may have something to do with it.

At roughly 25 years old, parkour can be considered an infant to its other recreation and sporting whānau, yet it is steadily making its way into the New Zealand education system. Do we not have enough activities? Why is it increasing in popularity? What is its value?

In the hyper-competitive atmosphere of our modern world, and in both the academic and sporting areas of our schools, parkour provides a haven of relief for educators and students alike. With no rules or recipe, students are once again able to explore to their hearts' content. Some of the key opportunities embedded in parkour that students and teachers have recognised include:

- exploring real fundamental movement skills (rather than sports skills)
- learning how to physically navigate the urban terrain, important in our ever urbanised environments
- developing a tool for overcoming obstacles that extends beyond the physical practice into all areas of life
- the ability to emulate TV, movie and video game heroes where parkour is being increasingly used
- knowing how to appropriately assess risk in a cotton-wool society
- a non-competitive and inclusive activity that allows one to participate without being left behind, picked last or made to feel inadequate
- a positive culture that values participation at any level and allows mistakes to be made

Teachers have highlighted that some of their least engaged students have found a real connection with physical



education when parkour was the vehicle. This shows that parkour and the factors above are special, but perhaps the greatest part of parkour in education is simply that it helps students remember that learning can still be fun, even when it's at school.

