Project-based learning: Local body elections

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The project

The project involved eighteen Wintec journalism students reporting on the local body elections in the second half of 2013.

Students reported on the Hamilton City Council election campaign with a neighbourhood focus. The intention of such reporting from the ground up was to find and set an agenda that takes control away from the politicians themselves. Stories were for publication on student news website the Waikato Independent (www.waikato-independent.co.nz).

The students had five assessments as part of the project during September and October. The first of these was to interview a voter and find out the issues that concerned them. That was then to be followed up by taking the voter’s concerns to at least two candidates for a response. Finally, the student was to return to their original voter after the voting, to find out what they had made of the election. The two other assessments were a report on a mayoral candidate meeting held by the Waikato Times, and a story based on social media used during the election campaign.
Students cover grassroots issues in campaign

by Editors on September 3, 2013 [Edit]

In an alternative approach, Waikato Independent reporters are tackling the Hamilton council elections from the bottom up. We are fanning out across the city to talk to voters about their neighbourhood concerns. Our reporters will then take these concerns to candidates in the coming weeks.
Student brainstorming in classroom

Council services
- Animal registration
- Sewerage
- Waste water
- Trees
- Parks
- Libraries
- Recycling
- Retain
- Public transport
- Cemetery
- Animal control
- Water
- Footpath
- Roads
- Lighting

Range of interview subjects
- Spread
- Age
- Culture
- Income
- Family vs single
- Occupation (labourer, doctor, beneficiary...)
- Ratepayer (or not?)
- Geography
Map showing geographic spread of students (white pins) and of interview subjects (red pins)
## Waikato Independent voter stories


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>By</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young Glenview family asks for playgrounds</td>
<td>Caitlin Wallace</td>
<td>September 2, 2013</td>
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<td>Samantha and Ryath Stockdale have settled into Glenview but wish there were nearby playgrounds to take their daughter to and get to know the community.</td>
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<td>Community centres and parks please</td>
<td>Olivia Johnstone</td>
<td>September 2, 2013</td>
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<td>Rototuna resident Matthew Perry wants to see less commercial buildings, and more community centres in the north of Hamilton City.</td>
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<td>Student driven crazy by recycling rules</td>
<td>Keley Wilson</td>
<td>August 29, 2013</td>
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<td>Students can find recycling rules confusing, and have no idea about councillors or council operations, says student Kathryn van der Maas</td>
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<td>More green, more birds, more trees – June Crew</td>
<td>Libby Wilson</td>
<td>August 27, 2013</td>
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<td>A retired Huntington resident has a few suggestions for the incoming council. They involve trees, vagrants, and a new development.</td>
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<td>Council candidates should get into community – youth worker</td>
<td>Libby Wilson</td>
<td>August 27, 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Get out to the suburbs and get your hands dirty. That's a youth worker's message to Hamilton City Council candidates.</td>
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<td>Cycle lanes, a living wage, and fewer alcohol outlets</td>
<td>Libby Wilson</td>
<td>August 27, 2013</td>
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<td>Jamie Toko has spent her life in Hamilton City Council's West Ward, and she wants to make a difference there by becoming a councillor.</td>
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<td>Macpherson aims to stop vital asset sales</td>
<td>Libby Wilson</td>
<td>August 26, 2013</td>
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<td>Mayoral candidate Dave Macpherson wants Hamilton to keep hold of its community assets, especially pensioner housing.</td>
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Waikato Independent video story on mayoral election

Student feedback on election project

• Worked well in making us take photos and video

• Covering the elections made us understand them and council much more – actually was quite interesting!

• Developed use of social media

• Used a wide range of skills for each of the stories eg: using social media, interviewing, council candidates

• Struggled to convince people to go on video – possibly need guidance on how to convince people to do this for us.