

Magnet

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Water polo star's words of wisdom inspire Eden kids

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Eden Public School pupils learnt a valuable lesson on the benefits of hard work and determination when an Australian athlete visited the school on Wednesday.

Australian water polo player Elysha O'Neill spoke to the kids about her life as an elite sports woman and emphasised the importance of living a healthy lifestyle, especially from a young age. The fit 30-year-old certainly practices what she preaches but she said she wished the importance of eating right and being active was encouraged when she was younger.

That's why she jumped at the chance to give that "important" advice to the young Eden children.

It was all a part of Elysha's role as an ambassador for the NSW Premier's Sporting Challenge which encourages students to participate and record their levels of physical activity for 10 weeks. Eden Public School participated the Challenge during Term 2.

"I want the kids to know that it really is so important to live an active lifestyle and to eat healthy. Whether they play sport or not, there are always ways to be active," Elysha said.

Elysha told the children about what it takes to represent Australia, the 4am wake ups, the hours of training a day and the regular travel. She explained that it can be near impossible to have a full time job, but said it was all worth it. Her story resonated particularly well with 11-year-olds Jack Caldwell and Morgan Thornton.

Jack who is a swimmer himself, said he already knew what it was like getting up before dawn and standing on the edge of a pool wondering why he was there.

"Sometimes I really don't want to get out of bed and I don't want to get in the pool, but its determination and that's what I need," Jack said.

"It was really cool having Elysha here. We have had professional athletes here before but I have never seen something to do with swimming, it's always football."

The boys agreed that one of the best parts of hearing from Elysha was learning about the amount of training she puts in every single day.

"It was cool to hear what athletes actually do. When you watch them on TV you don't see how much effort they put in," Jack said.

"And it's not just physically demanding, it's mentally demanding, they have to get up early, train a lot and sometimes miss out on fun things like birthdays," Morgan said.

While Elysha inspired the Eden Public School pupils, she said children like Morgan and Jack inspired her.

"It is much harder for kids living in regional areas like Eden. There is so much talent in country kids, they just don't always get the opportunities that city kids get."

Elysha encouraged the two boys, and the rest of the children, to keep working hard, follow their dreams, and of course, stay active.