

Good News Stories

Sustainable Schools Program

Achieving positive change towards sustainable practices

Youth Environment Forum

In 2004, the Department of Environment and Conservation (NSW) and the North East Waste Forum (NEWF) funded a successful Youth Environment Forum, which linked 16 secondary schools with 5 local councils to assist them in developing their SEMP. Over the forums 2 days, students and teachers developed strategies for waste reduction, energy conservation and water minimisation programs within their schools.

NEWF is a voluntary forum made up of council representatives from the Ballina, Byron, Lismore, Richmond Valley and Clarence Valley Councils to assist in the development of a regional approach to waste management and minimisation. More info: www.northeasternwasteforum.org.au.

Mt St Thomas Public School

Teachers at Mt St Thomas have different environmental responsibilities as part of the school's environment management plan. Student learning encompasses a wide range of topics on environmental education. The school has also introduced purchasing policies and engaged an environmental team. In addition to hosting environmental tours around the school the team also runs a bi-annual Enviro Fest. The aim of the festival is to expose students to many environmental issues and solutions, emphasising the messages of reduce, reuse, recycle, and avoid. The day also focusses on educating students about protecting and conserving the natural environment. 25 activities are incorporated into the event, which draws attendances from 325 of the school's students and 100 representatives from 5 other local schools. More info: www.mtstthomas-p.schools.nsw.edu.au.



Quote from student

"It was a great experience. It was quite a wake up call to assess the state of our environment. We have created a great action plan after discovering the state of our school's sustainability. The camp has motivated us act."

Middle Harbour Public School

Middle Harbour Public School has integrated environmental planning into their Before and After School Centre. Working with the community, the school is developing a joint approach to their Streamwatch program and the establishment of a community garden. The school's student environmental committee now comprises 134 members who meet fortnightly. The school has also introduced a parent "green card" system to fund environmental initiatives within the school. Over 50 local businesses have collaborated to provide discounts to encourage parents to shop locally, reducing their need to travel by car and in so doing also cutting down on emissions. More info: www.middleharbour-p.schools.nsw.gov.au.

School Administrative Staff Information Sessions

Environmentally Friendly Purchasing Information and Networking sessions were developed and held to assist schools in the Sustainable Schools





Program to implement sustainable practices as part of their school environment management plan. The information sessions were held for School Administrative Support Staff (SASS).

This was supported in November 2003 with a Buy Green Promotion trial with Q stores.

In early 2004, 5 pilot sessions were held at 38 SSP schools from selected city and regional areas of NSW. The sessions focussed on informing staff about environmentally friendly purchasing (EFP) and encouraged them to adopt new practices. The sessions identified environmental issues and illustrated potential short-term and long-term benefits of adopting environmentally friendly purchasing habits.

After the pilot sessions a procurement group was established to communicate the results and develop strategies to support schools. EFP is now incorporated into statewide training (potentially 6,400 purchasing staff across NSW) for the Department of Education and Training (DET) school administration staff.

Involving other teachers

The Sustainable Schools Support Team (SSST) has been working with schools to build regional school links and foster the sharing of information. Schools have clearly identified the need to work together and share successful strategies and initiatives. Some have expressed an interest in developing networks at a local level to maintain the momentum created around environmental education. Meetings to develop local networks have been held over 2004-2005.

Local, state and regions schools networking together

As well as acknowledging their outstanding achievements the SSP Recognition Program provided an opportunity for 38 regionally leading NSW schools to develop environmental networks across NSW. Students and teachers shared ideas, initiatives and challenges associated with implementing SEMPS. Following the Recognition

Program, email networks were set up so that principals and environmental coordinators of leading regional schools could share successful strategies and initiatives.

The networks are increasingly gaining support from teaching consultants, local government representatives, agency and non-government representatives, as well as schools outside the SSP.

Since December 2004, 3 metropolitan networks have been created in Sydney involving over 50 representatives from SSP and non-SSP schools, local government, government agencies and community organisations. The networks meet once a term to showcase and share successful strategies for implementation of the Environmental Education Policy. Sydney Region more info: www.sydneyr.det.nsw.gov.au.

National level

The Sustainable Schools Working Group was set up in 2001 to trial a Sustainable Schools Program in NSW and Victoria. Since then, the working group has overseen the development of the National Sustainable Schools Initiative. After examining the pilot initiatives in detail and considering the systemic differences of each jurisdiction all States and Territories agreed that a National Sustainable Schools Initiative was worth pursuing.

International level

Some schools have also expressed interest in establishing international links with Green Schools in China. Five SSP schools within NSW have begun the process of establishing connections with Chinese schools. One school has already formally established a link with QIUSHI Primary School, Hangzhou (Capital of Zhejiang Province).



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