Welcome to our first newsletter for 2012. Inside you will find lots of great examples of how the NRM Education team is working with schools and their communities to help create a more sustainable future.

There are now 7 billion humans sharing our planet with each and every one of us having an environmental impact. Climate change, energy and water availability, food security, waste management and threats to biodiversity are serious concerns. But what can you and your school do to confront these complex challenges?

Whilst these issues can seem insurmountable, we know that building resilient communities adept at working together is the key to a more secure world. Where better to start than in our schools, microcosms of our wider community and institutions of learning and well being. We think Education for Sustainability is one of the most important ways to build resilience in our young and prepare them for the imminent challenges ahead.

Check out this newsletter and visit our website to see how we might be able to work with your school.

There are so many ways of getting involved; you can start with a simple visit and chat with a local NRM Education officer or let us work with you to develop plans and training your staff.

Identifying aquatic macroinvertebrates at the Engaging with Nature PD at Lochiel Park

Term 1 2012

Working with your school

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[A] Elizabeth Downs PS (School Garden Bus Tour)
[B] Future Visioning exercise (North Eastern Youth Environment Forum)
[C] Linda Buith making a worm farm (EfS Learning Group)
[D] Youth Environment Council
[E] Christies Beach HS (Schools Sharing Day)
The Wipe Out Waste (WOW) student group was established in 2010, and is mentored by teachers Marie Newcombe and Tina Mouzakitis.

In 2011, West Beach Primary School joined the NRM Education Peninsula Cluster Youth Environment Forum, which provided more direction for the group. Year 6 student Alex said one of the biggest benefits of the Forum was ‘meeting everyone and talking about how we would change the world’.

WOW’s 2011 achievements include getting more recycling bins, starting a community garden, fundraising for rainwater tanks, and presenting at the NRM Education Youth Voice professional development session (PD) in August.

For Year 6 student Matilda, chosen as the Youth Environment Council representative for the Forum, her confidence grew as she realised what she was capable of.

‘She actually ran an activity for the kids in the Youth Forum. That was pretty amazing, I don’t think that before she would have even thought about doing that, or even thought she could’, said Marie.

Both teachers say it is great to support the development of these passionate young leaders. ‘They truly are amazing kids’, said Tina.

Despite having to meet at lunchtime, and having the Student Representative Council reject some of their ideas, the students have remained resilient and passionate.

Alex: I want to make the school look better, feel better, and to promote sustainability in our school.

‘I now know how to look after the environment at school and at home. I built up my confidence and learnt how to speak to other people’, says Noah, while Abby sums up their year, ‘We are on our way to doing what we wanted to do’.

Noah: I took this chance to have a say in my school and to build up my confidence.

Taylor: I would like to make changes in the school and stop people from littering. I have lots of good ideas to make the school better.

Both teachers say it’s great to support these passionate leaders.
[A] Alberton PS releasing purple spotted gudgeon at the Warradale PS Wetland
[B] Greenwith PS Science Expo
[C] Laying of the slab at Barossa Bushgardens Regional Native Flora Centre
[D] Royal Adelaide Show
[E] Prospect PS Kids Teaching Kids Day

NRM Education-supported events
Sustainability at Immanuel Lutheran School Gawler

Immanuel Lutheran School Gawler registered as an AuSSI-SA school in 2010 after their vegetable garden sparked their interest in sustainability. They chose to embark on a whole school exploration into Education for Sustainability, a journey that has teachers and students scrutinising their environmental, social, political and economic credentials.

All staff completed training on Education for Sustainability and it is integrated into the learning of each class. The school community has also been engaged through displays and newsletters.

In 2011 the school became an NRM Education focus school and they were awarded NRM Education’s ‘Education for Sustainability Approach Outstanding School’ at the 2011 KESAB Sustainable Community Awards.

This recognised the engagement and involvement of a majority of the school community with NRM Education, leading to positive environmental outcomes.

Immanuel Lutheran School Gawler will continue its exploration of sustainability in 2012. Students will again participate in the Youth Environment Forum, and the focus this year will be on the School Environment Management Plan and environmental auditing.

Some of Immanuel’s sustainability activities include:

- Every class looked at ‘what is sustainability?’ as a topic and many classes looked at environmental themes in their units of work (e.g. water).
- Students from years 5-7 participated in the NRM Education Youth Environment Forum in 2011, working on an energy saving project. Students produced and distributed information brochures; one on saving energy in your home and the other on saving energy at school. Two students were also selected as representatives for the Youth Environment Council of South Australia.
- Students are encouraged to pack ‘nude food lunches’ or take their rubbish home with them. The school has been so successful in reducing their recess and lunchtime waste there are only two small bins that service all their rubbish (350 students!), accompanied by a recycling and compost bin.
- Immanuel is now an Eat Well Be Active School. Students are taught how to teach their peers fundamental food and nutrition messages.
- All students are involved in planning, planting and nurturing a vegetable garden, alongside caring for a worm farm and compost.
- Students sell produce from the vegetable garden at their Monday afternoon Markets, now in its 4th year. It is popular amongst parents and the wider community, with all proceeds going back into the garden. Sales have provided for rainwater tanks, a shed and garden equipment. Excess produce is given to Gawler Community House.
- Development of native gardens within the school grounds and growing approximately 1000 seedlings in their greenhouse.

Reducing waste - only two small bins service 350 students!
We have always worked with enthusiastic educators whose passion for the environment transforms learning into an exciting and important experience for students. The sustainable school initiative values whole-school approaches to sustainable lifestyles that align with sustainability in the Australian Curriculum. This means that being part of AuSSI-SA and learning for a more sustainable future is relevant for all educators across schools and preschools.

The Australian Curriculum has three components that work hand in hand: Cross-curriculum priorities, Learning areas and General capabilities.

Whilst a new curriculum raises many challenges, NRM Education and AuSSI-SA participants are delighted with the inclusion of Sustainability as a Cross-curriculum priority in the new Australian Curriculum, alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, and Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia!

The Learning areas embody inquiry approaches in the curriculum providing opportunities for action-based ways of learning, ideal for education for sustainability. An example for AuSSI-SA schools is the School Environment Management Plan (SEMP) process that encourages students to investigate their surroundings, plan and take action to improve them and communicate their results.

The seven General capabilities, which include literacy and numeracy, offer ways for students to transfer and apply new skills in purposeful ways. This can include developing persuasive arguments to build a food garden, or collecting and analysing data in order to plan energy reductions in the school.

Welcome to the Australian Curriculum

In-depth discussion during the ‘Sustainability can you achieve it?’ PD in Feb 2011

Engaging with Nature

The evidence is mounting that many young people are missing out on spending time in the natural world where they can experience the wonders and explore the interconnected complexities of nature.

Too much screen time and the lack of opportunities can result in what is now termed Nature Deficit Disorder. One of the outcomes of this new phenomenon can be a lack of empathy for the environment.

NRM Education takes this seriously and has developed an environmental monitoring program aimed at helping students to get into their local wetland or bushland and to build an understanding of the processes and forces at work. Find out more about the Engaging with Nature program at:

www.nrmeducation.net.au

The benefit of hands-on purposeful learning is that students usually describe it as fun.

We are looking forward to supporting educators in using the Australian Curriculum as an impetus for change towards sustainability.

Young people need to be engaged with nature.
[A] Kids Teaching Kids Conference
[B] World Environment Day
[C] Upper Sturt PS
[D] Teacher PD at Greenfields
[E] Willunga PS
[F] Filming “Scope” for Channel 10 with Walkerville PS
[G] Hills Christian Community School
Willunga Primary School Envirokids restoring their local environment

For a number of years the Willunga Primary School Envirokids have been actively monitoring and contributing to the restoration of their local environment. The focus of their work is not just within the school grounds but also at numerous sites throughout the community.

They have undertaken water quality, macroinvertebrate, fish and riparian habitat monitoring, along with actions to improve biodiversity outcomes (e.g. eradicating feral weeds and planting indigenous trees and shrubs).

Envirokids Coordinator Karen Gerhardy says that ‘by participating and becoming actively involved in projects such as these, students are learning to not only help, maintain and restore their immediate environment, but also to teach and enthuse others to respect and care for their environment’.

A recent highlight was the Willunga Almond Blossom Festival where the Envirokids showcased to the community the great work that they have been undertaking.

They are also forging links to local community groups and government agencies.

Late in 2011 they were involved with a Biosecurity SA project to reintroduce mountain galaxias to the nearby Willunga Creek. This occurred after an eradication program was undertaken to remove an introduced pest fish. The school will continue to monitor the creek in conjunction with government agencies to assess the success of the reintroduction.

Willunga Primary School recently received an NRM Education award for their outstanding Engaging with Nature work.