

EnviroTEACH

An environmental education resource for teachers

Term 3 – 2017



▲ Environment Southland education officer, Mark Oster, working with students' understanding of sustainability at an environmental leadership course for secondary schools.

From the editor

Kia ora! This issue of Enviroteach focuses on the value of democratic participation and the ways our community, particularly our young people, can be part of the important conversations and influence change. At first glance, this topic seems an unusual choice for an environmental education publication. Read on and explore the role that Southland schools can play in raising a generation of people who think and act sustainably and who have the skills to participate actively in the decisions that affect our region.

With the 2017 New Zealand General Election not far away, Term 3 is an ideal time to get students thinking about the ways in which decisions are made at a local and national level. During the lead-up to the election, there will

be many issues highlighted relating to how Southland manages its natural resources in the future. Students should learn the value of democratic participation and how voting (page 2) is just one way that people can have their say about the things that affect their community, their environment and their future. There are many other less formal ways in which people can be involved (pages 3-4). Pages 5 to 8 explore some of the ways in which Southland schools can create positive experiences and develop young people's understanding, skills and attitudes towards democratic participation.

I hope you enjoy this issue. I've found this challenging topic very interesting to explore. You are welcome to contact the environmental education team at Environment Southland if you'd like to

discuss these ideas further. Our team provides environmental educational support to Southland schools, at no cost. We offer lessons on a wide range of topics, plus field trips, publications and professional development opportunities for teachers. Contact us with your request on 0800 76 88 45 or email education@es.govt.nz, or visit our website to see some of our most popular activities.

All the best for Term 3.

Pat Hoffmann

*Environmental education officer,
Environment Southland*



Democracy is not a spectator sport



▲ At Limehills School, the children understand their role in caring for the environment. They painted a sign in the kowhai growing area which reads: “Mō tātou te taiao ko te atawhai, mō tātou te taiao ko te oranga. It is for us to care for and look after the environment to ensure its wellbeing. In doing so we ensure our wellbeing and that of future generations”.

Democracy comes from the Greek word *dēmokratía* which means ‘the rule of the people.’ It’s a form of government that enables the people of the country to elect the leaders and political parties of their choice.

In a democracy, citizens are offered many opportunities to participate in decision-making at both at national and local level. This is based on the belief that everyone who will be affected by a decision has a right to be involved in the decision-making process. The greater the level of participation by people in communities, the more likely that decisions and actions will be influenced by the communities’ own goals.

Topics for discussion

- How important is it that New Zealanders vote?
- Should we be concerned that voter turnout is declining?
- What are the implications for the future of our environment and the community we live in?
- If it is a problem, what do you think should be done about it?

Voting

The most basic, defining, democratic right and responsibility of citizens is to vote in elections. Last year, Southlanders who voted in the local elections got to say who they wanted to represent them on the Invercargill City, Gore District, Southland District and Southland Regional Councils.

As a regional council, Environment Southland is made up of 12 councillors elected by the Southland public. They represent six constituencies and serve a three year term. Their role is to ensure that local needs are met by making decisions and setting the direction for the sustainable use of resources for Southland.

In this year’s general election, people will get to have their say about which leaders and political parties will be elected to Parliament. They are focused on providing direction and policy at a national level.

Why are fewer people voting?

In New Zealand, every citizen or permanent resident over the age of 18 must enrol to vote. However, voting itself is not compulsory.

Statistics on voter turnout show that public participation in voting is declining, particularly amongst young people. Why is this happening? Political Science research suggests that participation in politics is a learned habit and that the best way to stop the decline is for students to acquire the habit at school.

Refer to page 8 for information about the Electoral Commission’s “Kids Voting” programme.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1893 New Zealand became the first self-governing country in the world to grant the right to vote to all women.



How can the public influence environmental decision-making?

▲ Environment Southland catchment management engineering assistant, Robin Wilson, participating in a clean-up event at Oreti Beach.

Public participation involves much more than voting in elections or being involved in a formal consultation process. There are many other ways that you can become part of the conversation and influence the decision-making process.

Inform yourself

Open your eyes to what is going on around you and be aware of what the big issues are. Read newspapers and magazines such as *Envirosouth*, follow the news and social media. Attend events hosted by sector groups such as Beef and Lamb New Zealand, Dairy New Zealand and the deer industry. Find out about the big issues being tackled and consider the kind of world you want to live in. Begin to decide what you think and where you stand.

▶ **EXAMPLE: AS PART OF LONG-TERM PLANNING,** Environment Southland went through a consultation process to identify Southland's 'Big 3' priorities (www.es.govt.nz/document-library/plans-policies-and-strategies/long-term-plan). During this process we identified the three key areas where significant change and expenditure were required. The community was asked to provide feedback on the priorities (water quality and quantity,

air quality, and biodiversity) and how we planned to tackle them. Processes like this provide a great opportunity to have an influence on local government decision-making and future direction.

You can learn a lot and make a valuable contribution by participating in community environmental monitoring and citizen science initiatives.

▶ **EXAMPLE: KANAKANA MONITORING BY MURIHIKU WHĀNAU**

In 2011, a number of kanakana (lamprey) in Murihiku were found dying with unusual red skin markings and haemorrhaging. Kanakana are a taonga to Māori, and Ngāi Tahu whānau in Te Waipounamu have traditionally gathered and harvested them. In response, Murihiku whānau began to monitor kanakana from various rivers under the guidance of Dr Jane Kitson (Ngāi Tahu) and with support from the Ministry of Primary Industries and Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu.

The involvement of whānau in the monitoring programme was critical. According to Dr Kitson, "They are quite a difficult fish to catch unless you know how to find them. The best way is to use customary methods at customary sites – they are the experts. Once the kanakana are caught, whānau record

information about them, including their colour (a blue fish is a recent arrival back to freshwater whereas a brown fish has been in the awa for a while)."

(Source: ngaitahu.iwi.nz/our_stories/monitoring-kanakana)

Find out what other people think

Exchange ideas with others. Discuss your ideas with friends and family. If they disagree with you, don't be afraid to start a friendly debate - it's a good way to develop your ideas even further. Importantly, demonstrate political tolerance by respecting other people's views.

Take environmental action to protect or enhance a piece of Southland's environment

Celebrate Keep New Zealand Beautiful Week (11-17 September) or World Rivers Day (24 September) by initiating or joining a clean-up event at a local river or beach.

Express your views

There are many ways to let community leaders, the public and policy makers know what you think about the big issues:

- Find out who the regional councillor for your area is and make contact. Let them know what issues are important to you. You can phone, e-mail, write a letter, or meet with them in person.
- Write a letter to the editor of the local newspaper about something that concerns you.
- Become involved in online forums or conversations about topics that interest you.
- Speak at a public meeting or arrange to address a council meeting.
- There are opportunities to make a submission on a council plan or proposal. Visit Environment Southland's website (www.es.govt.nz) for current

consultations on things like resource consent applications, regional plans and proposals. These are the more formal consultations, but there are also opportunities on some occasions to be part of focus groups.

▶ **EXAMPLE: PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS ON THE PROPOSED SOUTHLAND WATER AND LAND PLAN**

In Southland, the public is currently involved in hearings for the proposed Southland Water and Land Plan. The intention of the Plan is to provide direction to the community on managing Southland's freshwater resources.

While the draft Plan was being developed there were several opportunities for individuals, groups and agencies to provide input. After receiving public feedback, the proposed Plan was formulated. Before making final decisions on the Plan, the hearing panel will consider all of the submissions and will listen to any submitters who wish to speak to their

submissions. You are welcome to sit in on the hearing to listen to what the submitters have to say.

For more information, visit the Water and Land page on Environment Southland's website (waterandland.es.govt.nz).

Join or start a community group

You can increase your effectiveness and influence by joining with other people. Visit the SERN website (www.sern.org.nz) for a list of groups and organisations involved in ecological restoration work in Southland. There are also a large number of online groups you can join, to keep informed on specific topics, promote sustainable behaviour change, to have your say on an issue or to petition for change at a local or national level.

▶ **EXAMPLE: FARMER-LED CATCHMENT GROUPS IN SOUTHLAND**

All across Southland farmers are setting up catchment groups so they can proactively respond to the expectations of the community and Environment Southland. They want to take responsibility, collectively, for managing the effects of land use on water quality in their catchments. So far there are about 15 farmer-led catchment groups in Southland, including in the areas of Waimea, Pourakino, Three Rivers, Hedgehope, Lower Aparima, Mid Aparima, Balfour, Upper Oreti, Wendonside, and Orepuki. Farmers in these groups are often very interested in working with local schools and community groups - so get in touch if you'd like to be involved.

Call for change and support worthy causes

- Sign a petition, propose solutions, lobby, protest peacefully, campaign for a political candidate or party, donate money, or volunteer your time.



▶ Members of the public protesting at the Southland Water Rally in March this year to voice their concerns about water use.

What can schools do to help raise environmentally-conscious students?

Schools can empower their students to be the change for sustainability that our world needs by giving them opportunities to make informed decisions and take action on real life sustainability issues. Worldwide, tens of thousands of schools have signed up to whole-school sustainability programmes such as Eco-schools (www.ecoschools.global), Enviroschools (www.enviroschools.org.nz) and a myriad of others with names like Green Schools, Sustainable Schools and Resource Smart Schools.

Become an Enviroschool

The aim of the Enviroschools programme is to foster a generation of people who instinctively think and act sustainably. Sustainability has many different interpretations. To us it means living in a country where people work with positive energy to connect with each other, their cultural identity and their land, to create a healthier, peaceful, more equitable society. It means the regeneration of resilient, connected

communities in which people care for each other and the environment. It means valuing indigenous knowledge and celebrating diversity so that everyone thrives. We believe this can be achieved if we learn together in empowering and action-oriented ways. *Source: www.enviroschools.org.nz*

Become involved in projects

▶ EXAMPLE: KIDS RESTORE THE KEPLER PROJECT

Kids Restore the Kepler is a major conservation project with a difference. As well as having conservation goals seeking to restore birdsong in the area, the project also has a strong education focus. The projects aims to help Fiordland's young people, from pre-school through to college, develop knowledge, values and skills so they can be confident, connected and actively involved in caring for their environment. The students themselves are the driving force behind the project.

“Many of us often wonder what kind of planet we’re leaving behind for our children. But few ask the opposite: what kind of children are we leaving behind for our planet?”

SIMEON OGONDA,
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT LEADER, KENYA



▶ A poster produced by students from Fiordland explaining their involvement in the Kids Restore the Kepler project.



New Zealand has approximately 1,100 Enviroschools and 35 of those are in Southland. The Enviroschools programme is implemented in this region by Environment Southland with support from Invercargill City Council, Gore District Council, Southland District Council and Kindergartens South.

If you'd like to know more about becoming an Enviroschool, contact the regional coordinator at education@es.govt.nz.

What can schools do to help foster actively engaged citizens?

Taking part in democracy is something that everyone can do, albeit at different levels and in different ways.

Schools and early childhood centres can provide students with positive experiences of real decision-making on issues that matter to them and their communities. The benefits of such experiences include developing political literacy and self-confidence in one's ability to make a difference. Children who experience being citizens in their classroom and community are more likely to continue to act as citizens when they leave school.

Outside of school, children can:

- Get involved in and influence their family's environmental management practices
- Share their views by participating in youth surveys
- Serve on the school council, or the

city or district youth council

- Participate in youth summits

The confidence and competence to participate is developed gradually - through practise. Ideally, children would be offered opportunities that gradually increase in complexity. Start them off with simple tasks and gradually work towards increased levels of participation and responsibility.

▶ **EXAMPLE: HOW A 4 YEAR OLD GIRL INFLUENCED HER KINDERGARTEN'S WASTE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

Last year, the children at Waverley Kindergarten in Invercargill explored how they could help Papatūānuku, our mother earth, and what they could do to make this earth a better place to live. The centre bought a compost tumbler bin so the children would be able to compost their fruit and vegetable scraps and green

waste. One of the girls, Izzy, wanted to know whether they could recycle their yoghurt pouches / suckies. They contacted Wastenet and found out that it is possible to collect the pouches and send them away to TerraCycle to be recycled and made into new things. The outcome of this 4-year old child's investigation was that the centre changed one of its waste management practices.



▶ Izzy showing what she learnt about recycling yoghurt suckies.

ACTIVITY

Place these activities in order, along a continuum, based on the quality of learning, participation and action-taking by students.

- ▶ Teachers create a roster and direct students to work in the school vegetable gardens during lunch breaks.
- ▶ Students undertake surveys of families and find evidence of an increase in families starting vegetable gardens.
- ▶ Students undertake surveys of families and find evidence of an increase in families starting vegetable gardens.
- ▶ As part of an inquiry unit, students investigate what vegetables grow in the conditions they have in their existing school garden site. They decide to move the gardens to a more favourable site.
- ▶ Students demonstrate to the community what can be grown in their area using organic techniques. Community members report changes to gardening practices as a result.
- ▶ Students research planting according to the Māori calendar as part of an inquiry unit. They share their processes and findings with the rest of the school at assembly.
- ▶ Students investigate the concept of food miles and use it to calculate the carbon footprint of vegetables brought in from outside their region or outside NZ. They initiate a campaign to encourage people who have to buy vegetables (i.e. people who don't grow their own) to buy locally-produced vegetables if possible.
- ▶ Students survey a local supermarket to find out how vegetables are packaged and why this occurs. They find out how the packaging contributes to the waste stream and the use of resources. An approach is made to the supermarket owner seeking a change in practice.

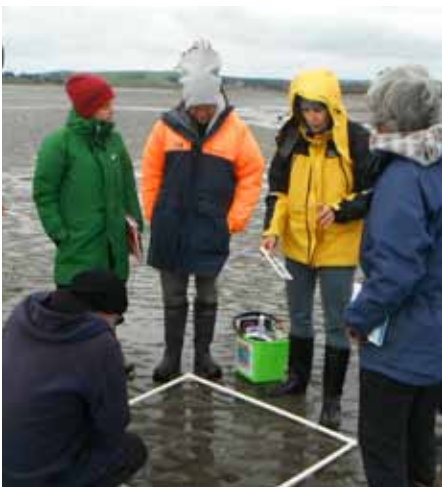
(Adapted from an activity in the Enviroschools Holistic Reflection Kit)

Educational programmes and opportunities



Enviroschools Programme

Enviroschools is a process of learning and creating change for students, teachers and the whole school community. When a school or early childhood centre joins the programme, they join a network of Enviroschools all connected by the same kaupapa. Each school is assigned a trained facilitator who helps to guide their journey. They receive a suite of resources including an Enviroschools handbook and kit, five theme areas and a vast range of online resources. In Southland, Enviroschools are regularly invited to events for teachers and students that are designed to motivate and inspire.



▲ Teachers from Enviroschools on a fieldtrip to Mokomoko Inlet with scientists from Environment Southland and the NZ Marine Studies Centre. They learnt about estuaries and how students can survey plants and animals living on the seashore by participating in the Marine Metre Squared citizen science project (www.mm2.net.nz).

Kids Voting Programme

Kids Voting is designed to raise awareness among young people about New Zealand's electoral processes. Building first-hand experience of active participation by young people increases their personal understanding, belief and confidence in electoral participation. Help create a future of active, engaged citizens with Your Voice, Your Choice teaching units. All units are aligned with the vision, principles, values and key competencies of Levels 3 to 5 the New Zealand Curriculum and Level 5 Te Marautanga o Aotearoa and link to the social sciences learning area. The material is flexible for different levels.

www.elections.org.nz

Youth Councils

Youth councils serve as the voice of young people to council and the government. There are three youth councils in Southland:

- The Invercargill City Youth Council
- Gore District Youth Council
- Southland District Youth Council

Youth councillors represent the views of Southland's youth and the issues that are important to them. They work with council staff, elected members, other young people and their communities to make a difference. Youth councils also participate in the planning of youth-focused events.



Kiwi Conservation Club

Join the Club that connects children to nature. Enjoy nature-based activities run by Southland's Kiwi Conservation Club (KCC) volunteer coordinator, Bronwyn Graham, who is based in Invercargill. KCC members receive a welcome pack and the fun and educational Wild Things magazine four times per year. They also receive monthly e-newsletters containing activity ideas and can become KCC Youth reporters.

Email southland@kcc.org.nz,
call 0800 200 064 or
visit www.forestandbird.org.nz/kcc



Global Goals for Sustainability

Participate in the World's Largest Lesson on the Global Goals for Sustainability – 18 September to 20 November.

www.worldslargestlesson.globalgoals.org

Helpful resources

- ▶ **Electoral Commission**
Kid's Voting Programme –
www.elections.org.nz
- ▶ **Enviroschools**
www.enviroschools.org.nz
- ▶ **Murihiku Polyfest 2017**
“Celebrate the Environment
– Whenua ki uta, whenua ki
tai.” Download the unit plan –
www.murihikupolyfest.co.nz

▼ Environment Southland biosecurity officer, Tom Harding, assisting a student from Heddon Bush School during a planting event at Horner's Donut. Students are actively involved in the restoration of the small native forest area near their school as one of their Enviroschools projects.



Special dates to celebrate this term

- ▶ **6-9 August**
School Peace Week
- ▶ **9 August**
International Day of the
World's Indigenous People
- ▶ **12 August**
International Youth Day
- ▶ **19 August**
World Humanitarian Day
- ▶ **8 September**
International Literacy Day
- ▶ **11-17 September**
Keep New Zealand
Beautiful: Clean Up Week
- ▶ **15 September**
International Day of
Democracy
- ▶ **16 September**
International Day for the
Preservation of the Ozone
Layer
- ▶ **21 September**
International Day of Peace
- ▶ **24 September**
World Rivers Day