

## Garden Suburb PS

Garden Suburb PS has 274 students and is located in an attractive bushland suburb of Lake Macquarie. It is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2008 and many environmental initiatives for the year have been a focus for this event.



A School Environmental Management Plan was developed in 2003 and has been updated annually. Its development includes consultation with the school executive and class teachers. Students are able to contribute through the E Team which has a planning meeting each term.

The school environmental education program is delivered through COGs units and the school has an

environmental coordinator to facilitate the process. The coordinator receives 2 hours per week relief from face to face teaching to manage the environmental programs.

An environmental focus is identified each year. In 2008 the school grounds were the focus to link with the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations and in 2009 it will be energy.

### Garden Competition

A Garden Competition was suggested by the students as a whole school activity to celebrate the anniversary. The event:

- Involved whole school commitment
- Each class nominated a garden area and received a budget
- Existing resources could be accessed eg relocated plants, mulch, GA time, environmental coordinator time, used tyres
- Integration with other subject areas eg art and science projects, maths calculations



The gardens were judged by a team of Lake Macquarie Council staff who found choosing a winner extremely difficult. A student vote was held and the prizes finally awarded to 2 joint winners. The winning teams made great use of recycled materials. A Wollemi Pine was planted to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

### Curriculum Integration

Activities from a variety of units of work are linked to school grounds activities:

- COGs units are environmentally based
- Tadpoles are grown in the classroom and a mulberry tree in the playground for lifecycles studies
- Potatoes are dug from vegetable gardens to make potato people for the study of 'Potato People' by Pamela Allen and 'Oliver's Vegetables' by Vivian French. At the completion of activities, students replant so potatoes are ready for the following year.



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- Sunflower seeds are planted and used for maths activities such as estimation and measurement.
- Waterwatch students measure water quality regularly at a local SQID and participate in the biannual Bug Watch. This year students identified erosion sediments in the SQID as having come from the school construction site.



Other activities include:

**A Frog Pond** has been established where students are able to watch the life cycle of frogs and dipnet for macroinvertebrates.

**A Paper Recycling** system is a student led initiative operating in each classroom. Students expect the 3 box system to be in each classroom and remind teachers if it is not. The final step is the paper being shredded for the compost bins.

**Food Scraps** are recycled through either a compost system or worm farms.



**A Vegetable Garden** has been in production for many years and is presently being overhauled.

The tyre system is being replaced by timber edging for easier maintenance.

**Water Tanks** are used to water school gardens.

**Lightbulbs** have gradually been replaced so that all lights now use low energy bulbs.

**Mobile Phones** are collected at the school for recycling programs.

**Audits** are carried out during Term 4. The 2007 water audit identified wet playground areas and high water bills. Investigations found a leaking underground tap which has now been repaired.

**Infants Environment Day** is a biennial event where hands on activities are provided by local environmental providers for the junior students.

**Environmental Events.** Throughout the year, students participate in a number of environmental events, such as National Tree Day, Clean Up Australia Day, Lake Macquarie Council School Environmental Awards, Landcare in Schools Forum.

### Challenges:

- Vandalism and graffiti are on going issues in the school. Creating a feeling of pride within the school helps alleviate this problem.
- Accessing release time to plan and manage special projects can be difficult to obtain.
- Applying for grants, sponsorship and competitions includes a lot of paper work and time.
- Motivation of staff can be time consuming. Once the system is proven and is easy to manage and supported by resources, staff are positive.
- Many challenges can be overcome with time and money allocations and the support of cover for teachers.



## Benefits

- The whole school benefits from the pleasure of attractive school grounds.
- Parents have acknowledged appreciation for the work carried out within the school.
- Students are involved and are positive and proud of their school.
- There are positive links to the community.

## People Involved and Acknowledgements

Principal Jo Swadling  
Environmental Coordinator Johanne Gardiner  
Parents  
Students  
Lake Macquarie City Council  
Landcare  
Whalan's Nursery

