

Paterson PS

Developing a School Environmental Management Plan

About the school

Paterson Public School is a small school in a rural village located on the Paterson River. It consists of modern brick buildings with two demountable classrooms. The school has a lovely bushland setting. Numerous trees and shrubs planted by students over the years enhance the appearance of the school.



The trigger

Principal Monica White came to Paterson PS with lots of experience in writing SEMP's, having been involved in developing SEMP's in her past 3 schools. Paterson has a lovely bushland setting and she expected a big focus on the environment. Instead she found that while there had been some major environmental initiatives over the years such as an established greenhouse and composting, these programs 'faded away' when faced with challenges or changes in staff. However, there were many ideas among staff for improvements that had a connection to the environment, particularly with relation to management of school grounds. There was a lot of interest and potential but no overall plan. She soon met parents who were also interested in a more organised approach to environmental education.

The steps

The aim was to develop a whole school vision and to have a more integrated plan to guide work. An environmental committee was set up comprised of parents and staff. The first step was consultation at every level including discussion with staff, parents and students. The School Curriculum and Management Reviews in 2007 were both focused on the environment. A parent survey was carried out to seek their views and identify experts that could help.

Students conducted audits to get real data. Each class was responsible for a different audit and parents were invited to be involved. Audits were all on different days and students were very enthusiastic. One class conducted surveys and interviews to collect ideas from

students. The SAM, GA and Librarian were also interviewed by students and the committee so everyone was involved. Monica gave a presentation at the local Rotary on their environmental program and ideas for the future. She also kept the School Council and P&C informed as the SEMP came together.

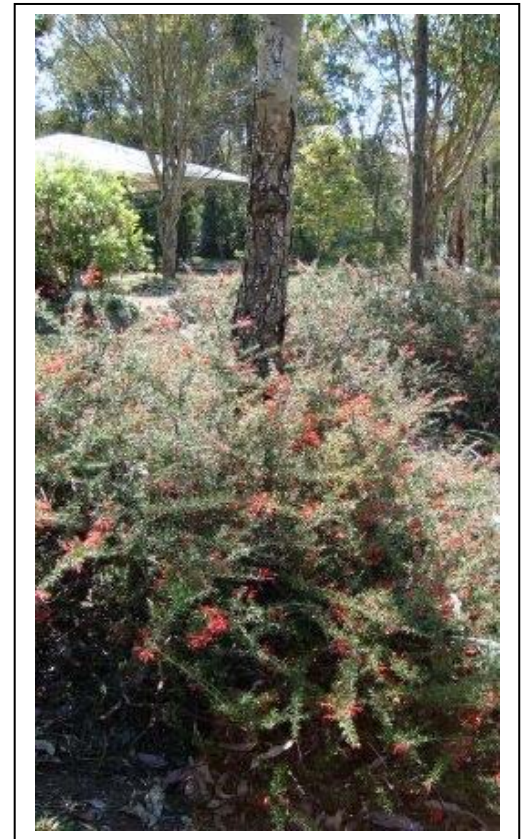
End result

At the end of the process the school had a 3 year SEMP. Parents on the Environmental Committee and staff had developed strategies. On reviewing the final plan, Monica was concerned that the plan was too large for the school to accomplish in three years. They needed a more practical approach. They are now using the SEMP as a long-term plan for the school and drawing down 1 year plans for the SEMP, with annual targets set in the Annual School Report.

Curriculum integration

In SEMP's developed at Monica's previous school curriculum integration had been a major focus. So curriculum integration was a commitment from the start at Paterson PS.

Staff did a Curriculum Review to identify where environmental topics already existed in their school's Scope and Sequences. Instead of developing a new program, they colour coded all environmental topics in green in their school program to track what was already in there. This allowed them to see places in the school program where new activities could be added. They look for visiting performances each year that have an environmental focus.



Special projects

The school has recently become a Waterwatch School. Year 3 and 4 are involved and the school believes this has been extremely valuable learning opportunity for a real purpose. They value the technology activities and can see their student awareness growing, as students start to use the terms and show good understanding of what they are finding out about their local environment.



The school has celebrated Planet Ark Tree Day for many years. They were also involved in local seed collecting and would like to apply for a Landcare grant in the future to re-establish this program.

A lot of work was done on waste in 2008. Students had many ideas on how to improve recycling and have developed

'Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle' approaches to paper recycling across the school.

Going forward

The school is aiming to use their SEMP as a long term guide for the school and hope that having a 3-year SEMP will help them build their environmental activities into the School Management Plan. The school is developing an outdoor events area on their grounds in a spectacular bushland setting.

They aim to use this area for their own activities but also as a facility that can be shared with the local community. They are keen to be involved in the Landcare for Schools program as this would fit in well with what they are doing in their school. They need to find a person who is able to lead this work. Paterson PS has identified professional development for EE as critical to help teachers become more confident and enthusiastic about supporting environmental activities in the school.

Challenges:

Funding: The school gets no special funding other than its Global Grant. All special environmental projects will depend on grant funding. The SEMP has lots of strategies that rely on extra funding to be successful.

Time is also an issue as there are lots of good ideas, but as a 'small school' they are short on time and people to lead.



Benefits

There have been benefits. All of the preparation work done in 2007-8 generated a lot of enthusiasm and interest. For example, the survey generated a lot of interest. It was clear that everyone was keen to be involved, no one wanted to be left out..

Some existing problems on the grounds were resolved. For instance, an old frog pond that had become an eyesore at the front of the school has been removed. The aim is to apply for an Eco-schools grant in the future to establish the pond in a friendlier space for the frogs.

The Waterwatch program has delivered many benefits including an understanding by students that their water can be healthy and unhealthy. Many ideas generated in the consultation phase have been developed and have all been beneficial, especially in the waste management area.



Students are very proud of grounds and the animals that are resident there. Paterson PS students have an intrinsic interest in the environment because of where they live, so it would be a missed opportunity not to have a SEMP to harness that natural interest.

The Stan Fry Memorial Award for Environmental Education

Each year at Presentation Night the school presents a student with an Environmental Education award in memory of Stan Fry. Stan Fry was a local farmer who donated the land in Paterson now known as Tucker Park. It is believed he planted the beautiful poplars in the park.

People Involved and Acknowledgements

Principal & Environmental Coordinator

Parents:

Students:

Other:

Monica White

Liane Corocher and Sue French

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