

Case Studies

Name of School: Anula Primary School

School Context:

Anula Primary School is an open plan school in the Northern suburbs of Darwin built just after Cyclone Tracey. A Pre-school is situated in the grounds of the school. The Primary School has approximately 500 students representing a wide range of cultures. Attached to the school is an Intensive English Unit, catering for students who are from a non-English speaking background. At present there are nearly 80 of these students 'attached' to the unit. As these students progress they are phased back into mainstream classes in their suburb. At present these students are predominately African.

Issues:

Anula School Working group have decided to begin tackling the litter problem at school and the recycling/reduction of paper, recycling of food scraps and other recyclable waste.

There is also a concern that our school incorporates large grassed areas that serve little purpose and drink lots of water! Some areas that are planted out are covered with trees not native to the N.T. We have a great number of coconut trees that have now been identified as needing to be removed.

Aims:

- To develop a whole school community approach/partnership that identifies (on a local and global level), and incorporates:- social, emotional, environmental, economic and educational issues.
- To promote student ownership of the process.
- To empower students to take action based on their learning/understandings, to make a difference.
- To have students reflect on their learning and actions to assess the impact on their environment and future.
- To develop educational programs that promote resilience, social responsibility and creative alternatives to promoting change.

What we did:

Learning

- Professional learning for staff to introduce Sustainable Schools
- Some teachers have written programs focusing on sustainability concepts related to school identified issues and implemented them in terms 2 and 3

Resource management/school grounds

- Anula School Working group have decided to begin tackling the litter problem at school and the recycling/reduction of paper, recycling of food scraps and other recyclable waste. The Sustainable Schools group have put in a submission for a recycling grant in order to buy two compost bins, a paper shredder and 10 extra wheelie bins.
- The student body (S.R.C.), have taken part in meetings to discuss the litter problem and ways that it may be tackled as well as the active role they would

like to take. Their ideas were then taken back to the larger Sustainable Schools Group (SSG)

- A Bush Tucker Garden has been planted out in place of grassy areas and coconut palms.

Governance and Community links

- A sustainable schools group has been formed and has been active since February 2005
- The school council identified ESD as a priority and shared vision based on values and beliefs and a school policy have been developed
- The SRC is developing an action plan regarding litter issues at the school with the support of the BIEC (Beverage Industry Environment Council).

What happened:

Educational benefits

- The environmental units of work being offered at Anula Primary School are linked to the NT Curriculum Framework and reflect the dedication to sustainable development within the school by the school and wider community.
- Students are actively involved in their learning eg participating in the recycling program, composting, bush tucker garden and monitoring of native fauna in the school and Anula Park areas.
- Students are developing skills in investigating, researching, planning, participating and collaborating with different interest groups to make positive environmental actions and decisions.

Social benefits

- The programs we have implemented thus far have promoted student responsibility in the decision making process through the SRC.
- It has also developed leadership skills through the management of these programs and student promotion of these to the school community.
- Anula Primary School has also developed links with a number of community groups such as Greening Australia, Landcare, National Tree Day competition, a local Arborist advising on tree care and maintenance for long term sustainability.
- The school has undertaken an audit of native fauna species pre-cane toad arrival. They will then do further audits after their arrival in the area. Students have identified that Anula has a far greater population density of Frilled Neck lizards than Kakadu and at least 60 species of lizards.

Economic benefits

Grants and awards

- Anula has received a \$3410 award as part of the National Tree competition. in recognition of the schools efforts with the bush tucker garden.
- Another \$1760 was received from the Federal Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts in November 2005 as part of the Community Litter and Recycling grant.

- It is expected that the implementation of recycling, reducing and re-using resources will provide an economic benefit to the school community in the medium to long term by reducing consumption of resources.

Environmental benefits

- **Waste and litter:** the recycling and reducing programs that were put in place have already impacted upon the level of waste found around the school. With significant reductions in waste and litter in key areas identified during a litter audit carried out by students. These 'hot spots' were then given a blue wheelie bin to help remind students of responsible waste disposal.
- The composting program has also been very successful with daily collection of vegetable food scraps that are being composted. The compost will eventually be used around the school gardens. This will promote plant growth and also help to reduce water consumption by reducing the need for constant watering.
- **Energy:** We are currently focusing on the outside environment of the school in terms of the bush tucker garden, composting, recycling etc... However, an energy audit will be undertaken to identify ways that we can reduce energy consumption within the school and the home. Turning off lights when class rooms are empty is already a common practice as well as minimising the time doors are open, letting out the cool air from inside thus causing the air conditioning system to work harder and therefore use more energy.
- **Water:** The school has begun a program of reducing water consumption. The bush tucker garden has a drip irrigation system installed that is computer controlled to provide plants with regular watering but reducing overall consumption. Mulching is also being used to reduce water loss. The school has also identified and begun planning for the whole school to have an underground watering system installed that will prevent vandalism and thus reduce water consumption due to damaged resources such as sprinkles, leaking hoses etc... This system will also be computer controlled to reduce water wastage.
- **Biodiversity:** Anula Primary School has designed and implemented a number of projects that have a strong emphasis on sustainability and biodiversity. The creation of the bush tucker garden was one of these projects and has provided the school and the native animals in the surrounding area with a high level of plant diversity. With some plants used for foods, medicines and other uses; as well as attracting native birds, insects and animals.
- Mrs Jenny Paul was the driving force behind this project but the whole school was required to participate in the activities needed to complete the project. A working bee was held one weekend with a very good turn out from parents, students and teachers.
- The ongoing composting program will enable the school to look at other ways to promote biodiversity such as having a native plant nursery on site using the compost as a potting medium for seedlings. Eventually these may be planted in the school grounds; as native plants require less water than introduced exotics.

What you learned (what advice you have for others):

As a whole school I think what we have learned most is that in order for sustainable development to occur in the school, it requires a commitment by the 'whole' school. By 'whole', it is meant: the administration, teachers, students and parents. Once this occurs, then a committee or focus group needs to form to develop a policy that the school community can work to. A high level of involvement by community groups is essential as they can provide funding, support, resources and expertise in many areas.

Developing a plan of action that has goals and targets is also essential. This will help focus your activities and prevent the community losing its way. Your plan should not try to achieve too much too soon. That is not sustainable. Having many small steps over a longer period of time allows many wins for the community. It also allows the community to see its achievements occurring, as often these small steps are realised over short time periods.

Finally I would think that constant monitoring and evaluation would also be of great benefit as it allows the community to assess its progress and make changes if it needs to before things fail or costs blow out thus making it unsustainable.