

Case Studies

Name of School: Irrkerlantye Learning Centre

School Context:

Irrkerlantye Learning Centre is an Intergenerational Indigenous Learning Centre that caters for babies to grandparents. It is situated in Alice Springs catering for Town Camp clientele.

Issues

- Environmental health re playground (dust and shade prevention)
- Water, litter and energy reduction
- Increasing biodiversity within school ground and creation of sustainable food source for the kitchen (vegetable garden)

Aims

- Greener school grounds through a desert landscape vision.
- Cut CO2 emissions due to unsustainable transport and farming practices by producing food on site.
- Retrofitting of infrastructure to transform building into a model of sustainability.

What we did:

Learning

- Professional learning for staff occurred to introduce sustainable schools and to explore what sustainability meant to Irrkerlantye
- Implemented units of work with an environmental cross curricula perspective linked to NT Curriculum Framework outcomes
- Planned yearly overview of afternoon sessions
- Collaboratively programmed focusing on identified issues that resulted in weekly afternoon hands on teaching and learning sessions.

Resource Management/School Grounds

Energy, water and grounds focus

- Funding was sourced through Landcare, EnvironmeNT school grants, Tangentyere grants and prizemoney from Planet Ark
- Planted gardens with different themes eg. xeriscape habitat garden and papercrete
- Commenced development of a food forest garden with the help of the men as part of a training program in landscaping. The food will be shared with the indigenous families of the centre
- Meals are provided at the centre so kitchen waste is composted and used to feed chickens and collection points have been established for recycling paper
- Minimised resource and water use by using timers on air conditioners and taking action on suggested strategies to cut energy use

Governance

- Members of the centre were surveyed through discussion and questions on their vision for the centre
- A SEMP has been created in consultation with centre staff and management to guide the centre in 2005-06
- Worked with the broader organisation – Ngkete Mikwenhe to develop Water strategy for the sight & grant applications for Federal Watergrants.

Community Links

- As Irrkerlantye is an intergenerational Learning Centre it has strong community links that are being strengthened through *Sustainable Schools*.

- Links to community organisations that have developed and strengthened include:
 - Tangentyere landcare and youth services (propagation, grants)
 - Desert Park (propagation and habitat study)
 - Waterwise
 - Junior Park Ranger Program (macro invertebrates)
 - Alice Springs Festival (sustainable float building)
 - PAWA (sewerage farms and bore fields)
 - Olive's Place (sustainable house study)
 - Appropriate Centre for Technology
 - Olive Pink Botanical Gardens (School ground flora survey and excursions to the park for flora and fauna habitat study)
 - Steiner School (to explore water system, no dig garden and cultural trips)
 - Ben Ward (Litter and Abatement grant recipient developing papercrete garden beds)
 - Alice Springs Rubbish Tip and Bowerbird Tip Shop (exploring recycling and litter reduction)

What Happened:

Educational Benefits

- Weekly sessions have an environmental focus linked to NTCF outcomes
- Hands-on, relevant learning
- Students actively involved in learning for about and for the environment using an investigative approach.

Social Benefits

- School has positive image within the wider community as being a place of innovation
- Successful beneficial reciprocal relationships with organisations outside the immediate school community
- Harmonious working relationships between all participants involved in the centre with lots of discussion and vision for the future

Environmental Benefits

- Environmental health outcomes in relation to the school grounds have been achieved eg cut in dust and reduction of litter by 50%. Reduction in cigarette butts due to installation of cigarette butt disposal units using recycled material.
- Aesthetically a more pleasing environment for students and community members to spend time in.
- Increase in biodiversity through establishment of xeriscape habitat gardens
- Establishment of papercrete garden beds utilising recyclable materials eg tyres and paper
- Establishment of shade trees and gardens in town camps
- Behavioural change with student being more proactive in turning off running taps and care of the garden. Students care for garden on weekends and provide security stopping outsiders demonstrating destructive behaviour

Economic Benefits

- Savings made from Tangentyere Landcare assistance scheme supplied trees and irrigation pipe
- Grant money received
 - Landcare Miter 10 grant \$500
 - EnviroNTment grant \$2000
 - Won \$1000 from Planet Ark Tree Planting Day.