

WOODBRIDGE

CREATING AN ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY SCHOOL

Sustainability key to the future

WOODBRIDGE Grade 6 student Lily Bobbi feels very lucky. She says not many schools have a farm, their own beach, a marine discovery centre and their own wetlands.

Woodbridge School is 40km south of Hobart, nestled between green hills and the D'Entrecasteaux Channel and looks out over Bruny Island. The school is working to care for this great environment and become more sustainable.

Sustainability is about the planet, the future, caring for resources and understanding how to make a difference. Creating sustainable futures is a key element of the World Futures organiser from the Essential Learnings Framework, the new Tasmanian curriculum.

At Woodbridge School, creating a sustainable future involves saving

energy, managing waste, such as reusing and recycling, and caring for nature. This has involved students in a count of their energy use, waste and paper use.

Everyone helps to reduce waste — students, office staff, teachers and parents. Principal Mr Chris Barnes said he minimises paper usage, car pools and recycles as much as possible. Office manager Mrs Sue Woodshreds confidential paper and puts her food scraps in chook bins that are placed around the school. She also makes recycled pads for notes.

The school grounds have been a focus for caring and responsibility for the natural environment. Every primary class has a patch or garden they look after. Class P/1 have been caring for an indigenous

garden, planted natives and have a good knowledge of the natives versus weeds in their patch.

Class 1/2 have a garden patch with their favourite fruits and vegetables such as sweet corn, potatoes, carrots and strawberries. Students will often be found caring for their gardens at lunchtime. Student Shara Piggott said: "It is fun doing the garden because everything is fun about helping nature."

They will harvest their vegetables for a Christmas feast.

The 4/5 class have rehabilitated a weedy bank in the school grounds. Students manage their own section and have weeded, landscaped and planted out their areas with native plants to create shade and habitat for barred bandicoots.

Grade 6 student Jessie King said: "Sustainability is the wise choice. We all want to have a spectacular future and good health."

Sustainability also involves community partnerships. With Kingborough Council, Parks and Wildlife and Australian Conservation Volunteers primary students planted 500 trees at Trial Bay to support the habitat of the endangered plant *Epacris virgata*. Students are working with the local Landcare group to undertake ongoing maintenance of the site.

The Sustainable Schools Program at Woodbridge is being researched by masters student Kristen Pederson, from the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, at the University of Tasmania.

JESSIE KING



TEAMWORK: Nikita Dubb at the Woodbridge rehabilitation site.



BIRD HAVEN: Woodbridge students examine one of the wetlands bird nests.

Farm part of the family

FARM residents include Miss Moo, the school cow, Muddles and Puddles, the two pregnant pigs, and the school chooks.

They are well fed on left-overs from students' lunch boxes and canteen waste and the birth of piglets is anxiously anticipated.

There is also a flock of sheep, which keep down the grass around the school, reducing petrol and other green house gas fumes from lawn mowers.

The farm volunteers collect the eggs, which are sold to the school canteen and staff and students see a system at work when they buy their egg sandwiches from the canteen.

The 12 acres of Woodbridge Farm includes the wetland, a native seed orchard and a greenhouse.

Agricultural teacher, Mr Steve Collins, said: "The farm involves students in hands-on experiences, with investigative approaches, generating new ideas and solving real problems."

The farm links with the local enterprise projects and secondary students explored ideas like making fruit soft drinks and essential oil production.

GREGORY DOWNES, TOM SLEVIN, TOM CHANDLER

Wetlands leaping

FROG Zone is a national program established by the World Wide Fund for Nature to rehabilitate wetlands for frogs and Woodbridge is a pilot school.

Frog Zone at Woodbridge began in a swampy, weedy hollow on the farm, with a grade 7 class developing a management plan with their vision for the site.

Once site planning was completed students cleared blackberry bushes and weeds. The school won the National Reflex Habitat Award in 2003, which enabled

fencing of the wetlands with the help of the Australian Conservation Volunteers.

A pond area was excavated this year creating a permanent deep-water area for birds and a variety of frog species. The students collected and sowed native seeds and had fun getting stuck in the sinking slushy mud.

This year all primary classes have been involved with weekly visits of around 70 students caring for the wetlands.

JESSICA DARE, HANNAH WOLF

Marine centre marvels

THE Marine Discovery Centre is just great. The centre is built over D'Entrecasteaux Channel, in Woodbridge, a safe waterway that provides ideal conditions for boat-based and shore-based activities.

The centre is a part of the school and has great hands-on educational programs for over 6000 visiting students per year, from kindergarten to grade 12.

Fantastic marine animals such as conger eel, gummy shark, thorn back skate, banded stingray, spotted pipe fish, flathead, big bellied sea horse, abalone and giant crab can be seen face to face.

The main sustainability issues for the centre are over-fishing and pollution. About 70 per cent of the world's oceans haven't been explored so there's no telling what might be down there.

The 15m research vessel, Penghana, is a floating classroom. It has a hydraulic winch for taking up samples to see if the water is polluted and students can also measure fish populations.

While learning boating safety and navigation, students may also use scientific oceanographic equipment to sample the life and environment of the channel.

ASHER ROBSON, DYLAN MACK

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