

St Anthony's School, Caring for the Environment

*I love to think of nature as an unlimited broadcasting station, through which God speaks to us every hour...
if we will only tune in.*

George Washington Carver

Over the past 15 years the community of St Anthony's Primary School in Greenmount Perth, have been endeavouring to work towards creating a culture of sustainability.

The school was relocated from nearby Midvale and needed to vegetate the new site. Over a period of 12 years, the surrounds were planted with native trees and shrubs and gardens were established into which children could plant and harvest vegetables.



A partnership with 'Men of the Trees' saw the establishment of a greenhouse which was ideally suited because it had been the fenced school bus lock-up. Soon



the children were planting native seeds and watching them germinate into healthy seedlings. The 5 000 plants were taken to country and metro locations for revegetation and to combat salinity.

*“The sense of wonder and awe
for the natural world;
for life,
is the most important gift
we can instill in our children.”*



Every class has their own veggie garden and in the last week of Term 1, children plant a range of vegetable seedlings. Preparation of the gardens is usually done with the help of parents, Boris, our gardener and the older students. They love to dig in the soil and add nutrient 'goodies'. The smell of dynamic lifter and blood and bone

always creates some commotion! When the children return to school, it is wonderful to see their excited faces, as they notice how big the plants have grown. The lettuce and Bok Choy are always first to be harvested, providing an opportunity for the children to cook a stir fry for lunch. The canteen uses the freshly picked lettuce for salads. Classes cook vegetable soups and make their own salads. Excess veggies are taken home to share with their families.



“...we have disappointed Divine expectation” Pope John Paul II



Over the years, different programmes have been introduced to support the overall sustainability concepts. These include worm farms, litter audits (We have become a waste-wise school) visits by Captain Cleanup, water incursions, accreditation as a waterwise school, paper recycling, dry battery collection and propagation of cuttings. Proceeds from the sales go to the parish and the Missions. We have received grants to install waterwise taps, toilets, waterless urinals and rainwater tanks to fill toilets.



Class programmes include visits to Mundaring Forest Education centre, where children learn about sustainability, through the range of stimulating activities. Appreciation of our flora and fauna and indigenous culture, are also popular excursions. Our most profitable learning experience, was the participation in the World Recycling Games, an internet based competition where students played games based on recycling concepts. We won the State prize of \$10 000 and used this to install waterwise taps and put recycled rubber surfacing under the playground equipment. Visits to the education centre, at Red Hill's award winning 'tip', provides wonderful experiences in environmental education. The children benefited by rich learning experiences supporting sustainability through the 4 R's; Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Recover.

*We are intimately interconnected
with other living creatures,
the atmosphere,
the land
and the water systems*



Into the Future

The generosity of the Rudd Government, following the economic downturn, has seen the school successfully receive a substantial grant to redevelop our garden area. This will enable new, more modern, aesthetically pleasing gardens and passive seating areas to be created.



Future initiatives are to extend our water tanks to irrigate the gardens, installation of solar collectors to supplement our school electricity needs, develop a composting area, elimination of plastic bags, and creation a native garden retreat.

Educating a community about how every person has a 'footprint' which impacts the environment, is at the core of the school's environmental teaching. Underpinning all learning, is the spiritual dimension and the consciousness to be custodians of the planet during our time on it.

Gavin Devine

Year 4 Teacher