

## **What is Environmental Education in New South Wales Schools**

We teach Environmental Education to students so they become more responsible citizens in society. With major environmental and sustainability issues facing us now and for the future it is important to develop the skills, knowledge and more importantly the values that will allow these students to contribute. Environmental Education is taught using the school as a contextual setting, using local natural and human environments and through understanding the world beyond the school.

## **What are the main requirements of schools in implementing the new Environmental Education policy?**

Schools are required to address the three focus areas:

- Curriculum,
- Management of resources and
- Management of school grounds.

It is then expected that schools will develop a school environmental management plan (SEMP) which describes their actions for addressing environmental education.

## **What is the role of teachers in environmental education?**

Teachers need not be experts on environmental issues, but they should identify those who are and make use of their expertise.

When implementing environmental education, teachers should ensure that there is a planned sequence of learning and that all students are introduced to a range of challenging experiences that encourages them to maintain an active interest in the environment.

Teachers should start with small manageable steps by introducing environmental issues in context with current teaching programs. Later a teacher can have a whole focus on an environmental topic or issue and use the KLA's to contribute the skills and knowledge.

Environmental education is best approached as an across-curriculum strategy. If environmental education is integrated across the key learning areas in primary and secondary schools, students will learn to care for the environment as part of their normal daily lives.

The teacher's role involves:

- teaching environmental education in those areas of the curriculum which are mandatory
- maximising opportunities to use environmental education as an organiser or theme to teach across the curriculum, including those curriculum areas which do not refer directly to the environment
- maximising opportunities to teach outside the classroom, using the resources of the community and highlighting special events

## **Are some subjects or key learning areas likely to support environmental education more than others?**

Yes. In primary schools the key learning areas of HSIE and Science and Technology include similar outcomes related to environmental education. In secondary schools, for example, syllabuses like Geography, Science, Economics, and Design and Technology include outcomes related to environmental education.

Although these syllabuses have outcomes specific to the environment, opportunities exist to incorporate environmental education into subjects that do not have specific environmental education outcomes. For example the collection and graphic representation of environmental information can support the achievement of some outcomes in the Mathematics Syllabus.

It is more important for the school to map where in the curriculum environmental education is being taught. This will ensure that students have the opportunity to develop all knowledge, skills and attitudes relating to environmental education.

### **What support will be provided to assist schools to implement this policy?**

Teachers from Environmental Education Centres and Environmental Education Unit for K-12 Curriculum Support are available to assist schools in the implementation of the policy.

Implementing the policy in across-curricular way has been made easier with the distribution of [Whole School Planning Session](#) booklets to help coordinate the activities of the school staff and [Implementing the Environmental Education Policy](#) booklet.

### **Where can I find suitable resources for teaching environmental education?**

There are numerous teaching resources, many of which have been published by a number of government departments and non-government agencies (eg. Environment Protection Authority of NSW, Environment Australia, National Parks & Wildlife Service, State Forests of NSW and Department of Land & Water Conservation).

The Environmental Education section of the Professional Curriculum Support Directorate provides resources on its own web site.

### **What is an environmentally sustainable school**

Through various activities and programs some schools are achieving a cultural change in staff and students that will result in the school community living with a deep commitment to the teaching of sustainability issues, reducing the ecological footprint of the schools resource use and valuing the natural and human environment.