

Seabrook Primary School

“It [sustainable leadership team] felt like something that could make a change in the school, and that I could make an impact” (Carson, Grade 6 student)



Photo 1: Artwork from the Sustainable Art club



Photo 2: Part of Seabrook Primary’s blooming vegetable garden

Seabrook Primary School is a large school of over 900 students situated in Melbourne's South-West council area of Hobsons Bay. Seabrook Primary School began their ResourceSmart journey three years ago, with aims to become leaders of sustainable practices within their community. To this day, their passion for the environment can be seen within their enthusiastic sustainability team of students, and their small, but dedicated group of teachers. By completing their Core module and securing a 1-star rating, Seabrook Primary is now working on all other modules to progress their sustainability program. Using SWEP and reducing leaks, the school has been able to save 1,260L of water per student per year. This is a great reduction from 3.15 KL/year per student in 2014 to 1.89 KL/year per student in 2016. With a frog bog in the making, Seabrook is now focusing on completing the biodiversity module.

Before the formal introduction of ResourceSmart Schools, two teachers interested in sustainability lay down the foundations of environmental practices. Helen Takano and Adam Smith put sustainability on the agenda through initiatives such as a worm farm, composting and sourcing the school's vegetable gardens, donated from the local Bunnings Warehouse. Soon after, Seabrook Primary committed to the ResourceSmart program, focusing on five key strategy areas, including Waste, Energy, Biodiversity, Water and Green Purchasing. The school’s program strategy and vision continues through the encouragement of Principal Susan Lee. Current teachers comment how she is “so supportive, believes in it [sustainability projects] and trust us”. This encouragement and support from their Principal, allows teachers such as Helen Takano, long time sustainable advocate, and Renee Easson, leader of the Sustainable Art Club, to continue Seabrook Primary’s sustainable story. The ResourceSmart program has also been recognised within the school budget, with a sustainability budget introduced this year.

Each year a team of grade six students form the school's Sustainable Leadership Team. This year, the team, led by Simon Luthi are looking to install a frog bog in the school grounds. This project brings with it great opportunity for learning in many forms. Carson from the student sustainability leadership team looks forward to the new “safe haven” for frogs to come and live. Meanwhile, teacher Helen Takano believes the new space will “open up so many opportunities for teachers”. The proposed incorporation of a sensory garden to the frog bog area will provide an “area that students can go to experience and explore”. This space could be used within maths or literacy classes, or even simply as a “nice quiet space” to be outside.

The Sustainable Leadership team are currently working very hard to make this Frog Bog a reality. Despite the challenge of time, these students have been involved in designing the bog. Meeting with Hobson Bay Conservation Ranger Andrew Webster, and Angela Whiffin, a horticulturalist from the Newport Lakes Indigenous Nursery, the team has proactively sourced information about the types of plants they will include in their frog bog. The frog bog was initially received with some apprehension from staff, due to necessary health and safety requirements. This however became a positive, as it helped the sustainability staff address and develop a risk management plan.

While busy with this large project, the Sustainable Leadership team also look to reenergise the existing vegetable garden, generously planning to supply their after school care with a variety of fresh vegetable. Other maintained sustainable initiatives include composting, recycling paper, planting more natives, and farming worm juice.

Teacher, Renee Easson runs a Sustainable Art Club during lunch time with 20 students per term. The art club promotes the reuse of rubbish, taking what “people usually see as rubbish we can turn them into beautiful works of art that people can appreciate and have then around the school”.

Slowly, sustainability has become more incorporated into curriculum. One of the inquiry themes, ‘Sharing the Planet’ encourages students to live harmoniously amongst their environment and care and respect what they live amongst. The school has further showed its support for sustainability with a dedicated budget created this year.

Participating in the ResourceSmart School Program has enabled Seabrook Primary to have a more in depth understanding of where they are at, and where they need to still improve. The module system has allowed for greater focus and to create more specific aims. This can be seen through Seabrook’s focus on achieving water savings through the Water module, and increasing biodiversity through native planting and their frog bog.

Providing their students with the opportunity to engage with sustainable practices, and their teachers the opportunity to incorporated environments based learning into their classroom, Seabrook Primary has stayed true to their vision of “*preparing and inspiring individuals to become responsible for contributing to a sustainable future*”.

Interview conducted by:

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