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School Environment Audit

How Environmentally Friendly is Your School?

Many businesses have an environment policy to ensure that their activities have minimal impact on the environment. The concept of sustainable development is an important one here.

'Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.' (World Commission on Environment, 1987).

What does your school do to ensure that it is not 'compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs?' That is, what does your school do to help look after the environment?

Does your school have an environment policy?

Before developing a policy, it's important to know what your starting point is.

Carry out an audit on your school and its impact on the environment. (The Collins Concise Dictionary defines the term 'audit' as *'any thoroughgoing examination or check'*.) You can gather information in a variety of ways: taking photos, conducting surveys and inspecting school policies are just a few.

You may decide to develop your own headings and write your own questions. If you would like some guidance, check out the section below. Just remember: these questions are just a starting point.

Water:

How many times per week are the lawns watered?

What time of day does the watering occur?

What proportion of the school grounds has native plants? (These generally require much less watering.)

Does the school have water tanks?

Are any grey water systems in place?



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Paper:

Does your school office use recycled paper?

Do students and teachers use both sides of the paper?

Where possible, does the teacher use the white-board rather than photocopying work and giving it to each student?

Waste Products:

Are there recycling bins around the school? Do people use them?

How much packaging do kids have in their lunch boxes?

Do kids have containers that can keep going home to be washed and reused?

What happens to the green waste from your school grounds? Is it later used as mulch for the gardens?

Transport:

How many people walk to school?

How many people ride their bikes?

How many people get to school by car? (Find out the number of kilometres each person travels in their car each day, getting back and forth from school.)

How many people take public transport to school?

You will need a system of recording the fact that people may travel differently on different days. Here's one way you can do this. Each person has a total of 10 marks to allocate. Imagine a student who takes the bus to and from school three days a week, walks one day a week and gets dropped off and picked up one day a week. That student's 'score' will look something like this:

Walk	2
Ride	0
Public Transport	6
Car	2

If a person gets to and from school the same way every day, then they are given a score of 10 in their particular mode of transport.

You will need a very organised system of recording the results of your questionnaire. You may like to record things such as: year levels; gender; and perhaps even names. This information will allow you to compare the results of various groups within your



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school, gather some longitudinal data (data recorded over time) and establish targets of improvement.

Decide on ways to report your findings. You may choose to present a report, give a talk at the school assembly or request to make a submission to the Parents and Citizens' Association. Reporting your findings is only limited by your imagination!

Think of extra ways of getting people to use their legs to get to school.

Energy

In your group, write a list of questions in regards to energy use at your school.

Extension/Alternative:

Develop your school's environmental policy and come up with ways of promoting the policy to students, parents and teachers.

Curriculum Links:

English: Speaking and Listening, Reading, Writing

Society and Environment: Investigation, Communication & Participation, Resources

Mathematics: Chance and Data

