

Introduction

What is the WOW program?

The Wipe Out Waste (WOW) program is a whole school community approach to waste management and learning. This integrated and interactive education program for schools aims to:

- ▼ encourage schools to reduce waste to landfill
- ▼ increase opportunities to learn about waste and waste processes
- ▼ improve systems to reduce waste and recover resources in schools
- ▼ monitor progress and continually improve waste outcomes in schools
- ▼ reduce the environmental impact of schools
- ▼ encourage and influence people to adopt more sustainable behaviour.

This resource is a framework to provide:

- ▼ information for schools to develop and implement waste management systems appropriate to their site
- ▼ information and learning activities for teachers to incorporate waste issues into the curriculum.

It is supported by a CD ROM and website www.wipeoutwaste.sa.gov.au containing the SACSA Framework and SACE links.

'We, as the custodians of our continent, owe a duty to our community, to our environment, to the world and to the future, to achieve a sustainable Australia.'

Sir William Deane, former Governor-General, at the launch of 'Natural Advantage: A Blueprint for a Sustainable Australia' October 2000

Background

'Attaining Sustainability' is a key objective of *South Australia's Strategic Plan: Creating Opportunity* that identifies, as priorities, the need to minimise waste, protect our biodiversity and secure sustainable water and energy supplies. Zero Waste SA (ZWSA) has a key role to play in achieving this objective.

ZWSA, is a government agency whose primary objective is to eliminate waste or its consignment to landfill, and advance the development of resource recovery and recycling (*Zero Waste SA Act 2004; South Australia's Waste Strategy 2005–2010, p6*).

The South Australian Government's *Zero Waste SA Act* enables State and Local Government and industry to work together to drive a new strategy for waste avoidance and reduction, reuse, recycling and waste disposal.

ZWSA developed and administers SA's Waste Strategy. It coordinates and contributes to the implementation of government policy objectives on waste management.

The Strategy was developed in response to the challenge of a long-term goal of zero waste in South Australia. It is a basis for action, focusing on reducing and avoiding waste, and recycling.

Education is a key focus of the Strategy. One of ZWSA's major programs is educating our community about waste management and changing behaviour.

The WOW program is school-based and encourages whole school communities to:

- ▼ reduce waste
- ▼ incorporate waste issues in the curriculum
- ▼ continuously monitor and evaluate progress
- ▼ celebrate successes in reducing waste.

It is unique in Australia as it spans pre-school to Year 12. Schools and pre-schools in all sectors are encouraged to participate in the program.



What guides the WOW program?

The WOW program mirrors the guiding principles of Zero Waste SA:

- 1) The Waste Hierarchy (Figure 1). This is a nationally and internationally accepted guide for prioritising waste management practices to optimise the environmental outcome. It ranks waste management practices according to their importance and preference
- 2) Principles of ecologically sustainable development as set out in section 10 of the *Environment Protection Act 1993* (www.parliament.sa.gov.au/Catalog/legislation/Acts/E/1993.76.un.htm)
- 3) Best practice methods and standards in waste management
- 4) Program development through open dialogue with education practitioners, local government, industry and the community.

Schools are also encouraged to adopt the 5 key objectives of the Strategy:

1. Foster sustainable behaviour
2. Reduce waste
3. Implement effective systems
4. Implement effective policy instruments
5. Cooperate successfully.



Figure 1

Why do we need a WOW program?

Research conducted in 2005 indicated that school communities generally have low levels of understanding of waste issues within schools and the wider community. Data from solid waste audits showed that half of the material sorted from bins destined for landfill could be recycled, composted or reused!

(For further information see **Section 2: Mainstreaming the WOW factor**)

Improving understanding of waste issues is an important step in encouraging and influencing people to adopt more sustainable behaviour patterns.

With the WOW program, whole school communities can work together to better understand, value and take action towards wiping out waste. The benefits for the environment will be far reaching and include conserving resources and biodiversity, and reducing air and water pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

How does WOW benefit your school?

Participating in the WOW program has many advantages for the whole school community and the environment. Here are just some of them:

- ▼ direct savings to the school, such as cost savings for materials purchased or waste disposal
- ▼ practical, relevant and interesting learning opportunities for students about waste issues
- ▼ positive skills, behaviour and attitudes to waste and sustainability that lead to a school culture of personal responsibility and sustainable resource use
- ▼ whole school community cooperation and teamwork to minimise waste in the school
- ▼ networking through WOW workshops and events
- ▼ access to current information and funding opportunities
- ▼ improved visual amenity of the school as a result of positive actions and increased ownership by the whole school community
- ▼ transfer of positive waste attitudes and actions to the home and wider community
- ▼ caring for the environment, conserving resources and improving environmental outcomes.



How does WOW fit with Sustainability Education?

The goal of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) is to integrate the principles, values and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning.

As we work towards achieving the goals of the decade, schools will be important in preparing and empowering students to assume responsibility for creating and enjoying a sustainable future. Such a vision for school education is transformative. It is more than a curriculum issue and requires a whole-school approach and innovative teaching and learning.

Well in advance of the UN initiative, the 1999 Adelaide Declaration by Australian Ministers of Education included the goal that:

When students leave school, they should have an understanding of, and concern for, stewardship of the natural environment, and the knowledge to contribute to ecologically sustainable development.

This means that students need to understand the complexity of the world in which they live and to have the knowledge, critical thinking skills, values and capacity to participate in decision making about environmental and development issues. This national statement supports schools in ensuring that their students have achieved this goal.

National Environmental Education Statement (NEES): www.deh.gov.au/education/publications/sustainable-future.html

The WOW program reflects the principles of NEES in that it will support schools to:

move towards becoming sustainable organisations by committing to identifying, conserving and improving the environmental and heritage values of their school site, and by reducing their ecological footprint. In the first instance schools can reduce waste, minimise energy, transport and water usage, increase recycling, encourage biodiversity in the school grounds, conserve the heritage value of the site, use sound purchasing practices and ensure canteen products are environmentally appropriate. Moving towards sustainability needs to become an important feature of how the school organises its daily operations (NEES). The WOW program supports the development of an ethos and culture of sustainability as part of a whole school approach.

Sustainability will only be achieved with the commitment and involvement of the whole school community. This leads to developing a shared vision for the school and to ownership by the whole school community of the ideas and values expressed in the vision.

This provides a framework for further developing policies, plans, priorities and actions to ensure that, irrespective of staff or leadership changes, the focus on sustainability continues.

How do students contribute?

Students play a key part in the decision-making processes of successful schools and have the capacity to make decisions as equal partners in the process.

A goal of student participation is to support and encourage young people to define and articulate their views or concerns on issues of relevance to them, and to work in partnership to design, negotiate and implement solutions to those concerns. The WOW program encourages this approach.

Students, through appropriate support, mentoring and training, can:

- ▼ identify issues for action
- ▼ participate on all school committees, reference / working groups or subcommittees
- ▼ contribute to designing, implementing and evaluating policies, plans, services or programs
- ▼ attend conferences and forums.



School Environment Groups can initiate and sustain change



How does WOW fit into the SACSA Framework and SACE?

The WOW program by its nature and purpose, fits most directly into the South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework (SACSA) through the learning areas of Science and Society and Environment. The program also highlights the Essential Learnings of Futures and Interdependence. Learning about waste issues may also fit within existing Environmental Education or Values Education frameworks in your curriculum. (www.valueseducation.edu.au/values/)

Educators are encouraged to develop integrated units of work that incorporate student needs and learning areas, Essential Learnings and cross-curriculum perspectives as appropriate.

A comprehensive set of outcomes relating to the SACSA Framework and SACE is included on the WOW CD ROM and website.

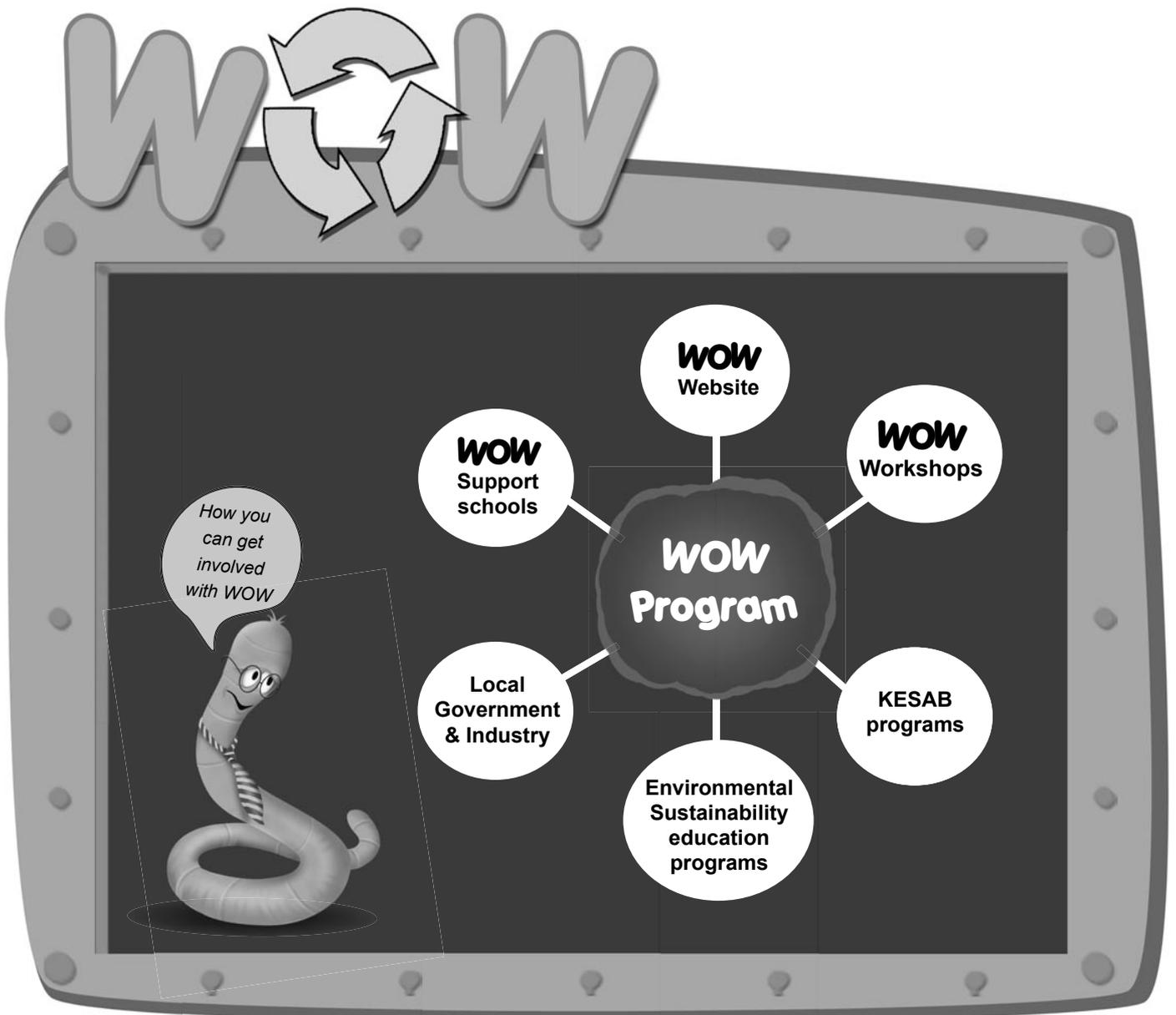


Figure 2 Getting involved in the WOW program



Getting involved in the WOW program

There are many ways to become involved in the WOW program and Figure 2 indicates a range of possible entry points.

There are 2 levels of participation:

▼ Participating schools

The opportunity to be a participating school is available to pre-schools and schools in all sectors (DECS, Independent and Catholic).

▼ Support schools

Support schools exhibit excellence in waste management systems and learning programs. They also have a willingness to share their experiences with schools in their local area. Participating schools may be invited to become a Support school.

Information relating to commitment and recognition for Participating and Support schools is outlined in the tables below.

Table 1. WOW schools program - Participation

Your school commitments	Participating Schools	Support Schools
Research baseline data for your school and forward to the WOW education officers at KESAB	Yes	Yes
Develop an action plan for incorporating the WOW school program into your school	Yes	Yes
Report annually on the baseline data, highlighting successes, improvements and barriers to progress	Yes	Yes
Attend Professional Development sessions for the WOW schools program	Highly recommended	Yes
Develop case studies about your school's approach, including stories from the whole school community, for posting on the WOW website.	Yes	Yes
Host a minimum of one WOW workshop - with support from the WOW education officers	No	Yes
Be available to support other schools in your local area	No	Yes

Table 2. WOW schools program - Recognition

What your school will receive	Participating Schools	Support Schools
A display sign for the front of the school acknowledging the school's involvement in the WOW program	Yes	Yes
A framed certificate identifying them as a WOW support school	No	Yes
Invitation to participate in WOW events	Yes	Yes