



# Case Study

## McLaren Vale Primary School

Years: R - 7

School population: 470

Location: McLaren Vale

Source: Rob McFarlane, Environmental Education Coordinator

A WOW Support School

### Highlights

With excellent systems in place at the school, including an Environment Group and an Environmental Education coordinator (part-time), McLaren Vale PS has received many awards including

- ▼ KESAB Tidy Towns Environmental School awards have been received from 2000-2005 with the school being awarded the title of Equal Best Environmental School in 2004 (shared with Port Vincent PS)
- ▼ 2005 National Excellence in Teaching Community Award (Rob McFarlane)
- ▼ 2005 Catchment Care Award
- ▼ 2005 McLaren Vale Business Association Regional Environment Award

The school has a large compost area, permaculture garden, and chicken coop designed and built by students. Eggs are sold at school through 'McLaren Vale Cackleberries' which has raised over \$1300 since 2003.

A grounds / Environmental Education shed constructed in 2004 to store environmental and science resources is located near the garden and chickens.

As part of the litter prevention strategy each class is responsible for a specific area of the school grounds. The SRC recognises class efforts with Merit Certificates and the cleanest area each fortnight is awarded the 'Golden Dustpan'.



'Golden Dustpan' award



2005 KESAB Tidy Towns Award

### What the school says about waste

Composting is a daily routine

*'After lunch, every day, we take the food scraps from our class to the black bin with a picture of a sun on its lid. The monitors are very responsible.'*

JP Compost Monitor

*'Once a week we make compost using food scraps, straw, manure, old potting mix, lime and water. We work in teams. It is important to work together and use tools safely.'*

Daniel, Year 4

*'It is important to keep a written record of how we make the compost so we can compare results and improve quality.'*

Elke, Year 5

*'In one term (2004) we collected 1620 kg of paper and card which was made into paper products. This meant less trees needed to be cut down to make paper.'*

Student Environment Committee, 2004



## Waste Systems and Learning

### Waste in Curriculum

Waste learning occurs as part of Enterprise Education: the building of the chicken coop was part of this program. Classes have raised day-old chicks and hatched eggs in incubators.

*'It was exciting designing, building and maintaining the chicken coop. Everyone was very enthusiastic and worked cooperatively in teams.'*

Olivia and Georgia

Students are also involved in waste management, with 'wheelie' rubbish bins collected daily and a lifter used to empty them into the skip.

Students participated in a School Waste Audit in 2005, with results assessed by the school and areas for improvement identified.

### Reducing & Reusing

Waste-free lunch days began on World Environment Day 2003 and are now held annually to encourage the reduction of packaging in school lunches. Students collect data on litter, waste, recycling and behaviour in the school, and promote the waste-free lunch day via newsletter, assemblies and posters. On the day, bins are removed and any waste is taken home by students. The impetus for this initiative produced a school policy to be developed, as set out below.

Reuse practices include the collection of scrap materials for art and craft.

### Recycling

Paper / cardboard, 5c container recycling and composting are aided by the fact that students eat lunch in their classroom. Clearly labelled containers for these items are located in each classroom. Paper recycling containers are also in all staff areas and OSHC. Approximately 12 skips per year of paper / cardboard are recycled through SITA Environmental Solutions.

Recycling of 5c containers occurs through the classroom collection which is emptied daily into red 'wheelie' bins. Twice weekly, teams of students sort and rinse these items prior to bagging. A detailed record is kept of all items collected. The money raised supports other environmental projects. In 2005, \$118 was raised. Some of this has been sent to Sri Lanka to help improve living conditions there. In 2006, over \$200 is expected.

### MVPS Waste Minimisation and Litter Reduction Policy

It is the policy of this school that the strategies of reduce, reuse, recycle and compost will be incorporated in its everyday activities, and that waste minimisation and litter reduction will be included in the relevant areas of the school curriculum. Recycled products and others that help reduce waste will be purchased where possible.

Like all schools, this school has the potential to produce large amounts of solid waste. However, it is the aim of this school to dispose of the least amount of solid waste to sanitary landfill as possible. This will lead to financial savings for the school, considerable benefits for the environment and many opportunities for students to learn environmentally sound attitudes and habits.

It is also the aim of this school to have the least amount of litter in the school buildings and grounds. This will lead to a more attractive school and save money and time in collecting carelessly discarded litter. It is also important from a health viewpoint.

The school is committed to a whole-school approach to environmental education, of which waste minimisation and litter reduction is an important component.

MVPS Environmental Education Focus Group  
2003



Rinsing 5c containers collected

Printer and toner cartridges are recycled through 'Close the Loop'.

Compost buckets are emptied daily by students. Buddy classes train younger students in this process. Some Junior Primary classes are involved in operating worm farms.

On alternate days, food scraps are fed to the worms in the worm farm. Students are involved in cutting food into small pieces and mixing it with manure, clippings and water. The castings are used to fertilise the Junior Primary Vegetable Garden and the seedlings grown by the Herb Club.

Chickens are an important part of the composting and green waste management program. Chicken manure and old bedding straw are used in the compost and it is planned to use the chickens for weed control.



Emptying compost buckets

## Getting started and keeping it going

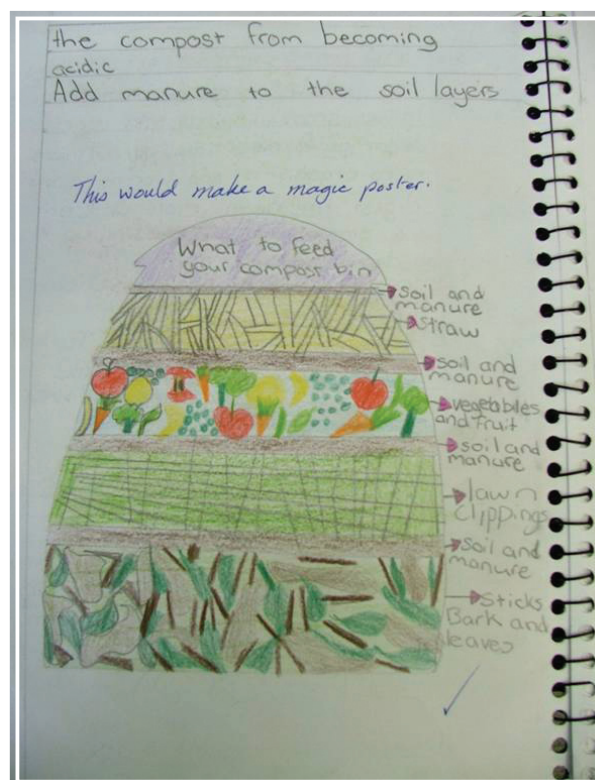
Key factors that have helped establish the waste programs include engaging people by building from their interest, working with a small group (a support network is needed), developing a structure and having manageable aims.

### Whole School Community

Whole school community involvement takes place in many ways with the chicken coop being a great example. Initially there were just a few people interested in the Planning Committee, but this has grown to a whole school community approach, with local service clubs involved in supporting students to plan and build the coop.

The Canteen also supports waste-reducing initiatives and, after a School Waste Audit in 2005, began ordering paper-based containers instead of the plastic containers which had previously been in use.

Many local businesses, including hardware stores, wineries, landscapers and plumbers, have supported school initiatives through discounts, donations and advice for school projects.



Compost in curriculum