
Enviroschools Student Leadership Conference

Pine Valley Outdoor Centre, September 15, 2011

Background

Following our successful primary and intermediate Enviroschools Bus Tour in 2010, schools through an end of year evaluation, requested a further opportunity for their students to network to learn from each other.

Discussions were held with Marlborough District Council educators and Department of Conservation staff and the idea of a Student Leadership Conference day was proposed and it was decided to hold it during Conservation Week. The purpose of the day was to give student leaders in Enviroschools the opportunity to learn about relevant topics and how they could take action in their schools as well as have some fun and share what programmes and projects their schools had undertaken. Invitations were sent out to all 16 primary and intermediate schools Enviroschools in our region. Twelve schools took the opportunity to send four students from their school and a supporting staff member to the leadership day.

Event

It was decided to hold the event at a local Community Outdoor Centre as many schools use this facility for camping. The Pine Valley Outdoor Centre is about 40 minutes from Blenheim, so a bus was arranged to transport students and teachers to and from the site. Students were welcomed onto the site by DOC and Council staff and given an explanation on the purpose of the conference day and the outline of the four workshop sessions.

Students were given a delegate workbook so they could write down any ideas from each of the workshops they attended, including what actions they could take back to their schools.

Students were then divided into groups of 12 and rotated around each workshop throughout the day with a teacher supervisor. All workshops sessions included thinking and activities to help develop skills for leadership and action in Enviroschools

The four workshops were:

Adventure Based Leadership - This workshop was focused on developing team work, confidence and experience in taking outdoor games. Students were given the opportunity to take part in the games, look at how they could be adapted to make them more challenging, and then were asked to devise their own games using the simple equipment provided. Students were then given a written copy of the games to take back to their school. Games learn included Mine Field, Toxic Waste, Helium Sticks and Tug of War.



Conservation for the Future - This workshop looked at what DOC's role was, why it was important to protect nature, what students thought were important areas and species to protect and how to compile a submission to share their learning.

Action on Waterways - This workshop looked at issues around Marlborough's natural waterways, including looking at the ecosystem in our waterways, clarity of water, impacts of pollution and action on how to care for our waterways including the "Drains to Streams" programme and the "Taylor River Writers' Walk."



Energy for Change - This workshop focussed on energy for our future. Discussions were held on what energy is, including clean and sustainable energy. Students then undertook an energy audit of the Outdoor Centre and made recommendations on what could be changed to make the buildings and site more energy efficient.



Lunch time was an opportunity to talk and network as well as have some fun on the adventure playground at the campsite or to weave a flax fish

At the end of the day students were brought back together as one group and each group was asked to reflect and report on the last workshop session they attended. Students were then given time to share their current action projects at their individual school with the whole group.

The day was hugely successful and the feedback from students, teachers and educators was very positive

A big thank you to the team of educators who helped to develop and run the workshops especially Shelly from DOC who lead the programme on the day, to the Pine Valley Outdoor Centre Trust for the use of their great facility, to the teachers and teacher aides who supported the students on the day, the 45 fantastic students who attended the conference and to Mother Earth for funding the bus costs, teacher release time and giving us some yummy food to eat on the bus home.

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