

The Point Preschool Oyster Bay NSW

The Point Preschool is a small business providing quality early childcare education for up to 40 children aged 3 – 5 years. Based in Oyster Bay, Sydney. The Point Preschool is a not-for-profit community-based preschool that employs 2 full time and 5 part time staff.

Recycling and Green Initiatives

Vision

The Point Preschool aims to demonstrate best practice in environmental education and provide a role model to the children, their families and the community. Through their practices, they hope to encourage the children and their families to adopt attitudes and practices that care for the environment.

The preschool aspires to reduce its ecological footprint. A founding principle of the Point Preschool is “reduce, reuse, recycle and rethink”. They believe that actively implementing this philosophy through simple actions encourages a sense of responsibility for waste created, as well as establishing lifelong sustainable practices in many areas.

Planning

Over the last eight years, the preschool has evaluated the sustainability of their operations. This has involved regular water, energy and waste management audits and research into sustainable practices. Audits revealed that prime areas for improvements were reducing waste, particularly from lunches, and reducing water use.

Support for the program design and implementation was sourced from a range of organisations such as environmental educators networks, the local Dharawal people and St Vincent de Paul. The recruitment of a Sustainability Officer for the Management Commitment has facilitated critical examination of current practice at every level, such as purchasing policy and event management.

The staff, children and families and the community have been actively involved throughout the program. Through its implementation and success, the children have taken increasing ownership of the program and now steer the direction of the projects. Recent extension projects have included a National Recycling Week swap party, recycled material quilt and a ‘Save the Whales’ campaign recycled bottle sculpture.



The garden is watered from tank rainwater monitored by the children.

Greening your workplace

Implementation

The first stage of the program was to involve the families in Low Waste Lunch Challenges. On these days, the materials remaining after lunch were weighed. Step by step, the 'rubbish' was examined and systems set up to re-use or recycle these materials. Firstly a worm farm was established, then a compost bin to take additional organics. Recycling practices were improved and material being recycled was investigated for potential re-use options.

This recycling audit process enabled the preschool to realise how many containers could be re-used through their craft and other activities.

Yoghurt pots were used in making bio-pots for seedlings, which the preschool now sells. Their re-use program has now expanded, and families and the local community collect and bring in items ranging from ice-cream containers, paper and magazines to cloth, pans, bowls and toys. Rather than buying materials for craft activities, the children and staff now design their activities around the materials available to re-use.

The project to reduce water consumption involved discussing water use with the children, and setting up low water practices. Children now act as water monitors, and only play with water if it is rainwater collected in a bucket. Water gauges have helped to give regular feedback on water tank levels.

Results and Benefits

The waste from lunches dropped until it was half a gram for twenty children and two staff per day, so the Low Waste Lunch policy has now become No Waste Lunches. The landfill bins are now collected less frequently. Through re-using so many items for craft, the Point Preschool has saved a significant amount

of money from not buying craft materials for the last sixteen months.

The recycling mentality has become the norm for children at the preschool, with many families encouraged to build a worm farm at home. For National Recycling Week 2008, the children held a successful swap party, bringing in costumes, games, clothes and more to swap with each other.

Water use is now minimal and has dropped massively over five years. The children have come to understand the meaning of reducing their impact on the environment and enthusiastically spread the word to their families and the community.

Challenges

The only challenge has been how to store all the materials collected and donated for their projects, involving re-organising the storeroom.

Future

The Point Preschool program is continually inspired by the children's interest, connections with the community, current environmental issues and care for the planet. Their 3rd Annual Sustainability Expo will be held in early 2009, where the children are running workshops on recycling, worm farming, vegetable gardens, making safe habitats for wildlife and making biopots using yoghurt containers.

The recycled material quilt will be displayed at Hazelhurst Art Gallery in 2009. New art projects will create sculptures from recycled materials for the garden.

The Point Preschool recommends that other businesses take small steps and start with an area that staff are interested in. Celebrating your sustainable achievements along the way is also very important to give positive reinforcement to continue your practices.

"The lunch waste dropped to half a gram per day"



The recycled material quilt will be displayed at Hazelhurst Art Gallery in 2009.



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