



Report 07.383  
Date 11 June 2007  
File ENV/19/10/084

Committee Environment Committee  
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## ***Take Action* update**

### **1. Purpose**

To update the Committee about the current implementation of *Take Action* by means of a case study and presentation.

### **2. Background**

One of the outcomes of the recent Community Engagement Review was to change the delivery of *Take Action* to establish more long-term relationships with schools and achieve more effective learning. Our previous experience with schools suggested that this approach would encourage and promote both greater learning and more sustainability within our schools as they adopt long term systems that encourage this kind of behaviour.

### **3. Teaching Practice**

There are two aspects of environmental education which enable students to learn about and understand environmental issues. These are the environmental messages we are teaching and the *way that we teach* or, in other words, the way that we deliver those messages.

Over the past seven years, there have been significant developments in the delivery and implementation of teaching and learning practices in New Zealand classrooms. Central to this has been the development of student centred learning and inquiry learning. The expectation that this approach will be used in the classroom has grown and consolidated. This development is exciting for the *Take Action* teachers as environmental education is well-suited to this type of approach.

*Take Action* is based on an inquiry learning model where students take ownership of their own learning in a 'real life' context. Environmental education is built on taking action – learning through doing - with students applying ideas and experiences gained through their learning to identify problems, find solutions to problems themselves, and implement solutions. As students do this they develop awareness, increase their knowledge, change attitudes, develop skills and ultimately change their behaviour.

The teaching and learning process employed in *Take Action* is essential to achieving an effective outcome. Without student ownership of the project and the opportunity for students to take responsibility themselves the outcome is often not sustainable. If the projects are teacher directed and the students are simply following instructions then the project ultimately belongs to the teacher and not the students.

#### **4. St Bernadette's School - a case study**

St Bernadette's school provides a good example of what can be achieved through *Take Action* using the inquiry learning model. The students' achievements and the experiences of the teaching staff are illustrated in the presentation that accompanies this report. The school is a five teacher, full primary school situated in the heart of Naenae, Lower Hutt. It is a decile 2 school and its feeder area is one of mainly Pacifica and immigrant families. Many of the students at St Bernadette's School speak English as their second language.

The school's history of environmental education is as follows:

- *Take Action for Water* – 2005
- Trial School for the new *Take Action for Air* programme – 2006
- Tree planting with the Department of Conservation at Catchpool, Wainuiomata – 2006
- (Students were keen to put their planting skills to good use in their local community).
- Participated in the Hutt City Council WOW tour (World of Waste). This tour enabled students to increase their understanding about waste and where it goes, which motivated them to get their own school recycling system up and running).
- Received a Bronze Enviroschool Award in December 2006 (based on the action project work undertaken as part of *Take Action*)

When the staff and students at St Bernadette's participated in *Take Action for Water* in 2005, it was their first opportunity to be involved in an environmental education programme. From this starting point their enthusiasm and integration of environmental education into their teaching and learning programmes has gone from strength to strength. The teachers are very focussed on the process of learning and work hard to achieve student participation and ownership of their own learning. As a result the action project work completed in the school very obviously belongs to the students and is proving to be sustainable and long term.

*Take Action* staff have worked with this school since initially training the teachers in 2005. Assistance has been given in the usual ways, such as meeting with the teachers to plan action projects and helping both staff and students through email and phone contact. Support has also been given on planting days, working with small student groups on projects such as energy audits, vegetable garden establishment, and so on.

This coming term there will be a school wide focus on waste. Students will re-evaluate their current paper recycling system to ensure that it is meeting their expectations of reducing the volume of waste going to landfill and look for ways of adding value to their project. The students are intending to apply for a silver Enviroschool Award later this year, based on the action project work they have completed as a part of *Take Action for Air* in 2006. Staff and students are clear that environmental education is a living component of their school culture which they intend to be long term and enduring.

St Bernadette's is a good example of what we want schools to achieve. This isn't always possible as it depends on a teacher's delivery, confidence and experience in the facilitation of inquiry learning based programmes. However, through our training of teachers, we are extending the number of teachers who can work in this way and it is our expectation that most of our *Take Action* schools will go on to experience the success of inquiry based learning (and the wealth of experience it brings).

## 5. **Communication**

The school's Principal regularly communicates progress with environmental education projects to the school community through the school newsletter. Student representatives from each class who form the school Enviro Group have recently negotiated a section of the newsletter to be dedicated to project updates and progress reports written by them. This section will also include environmental tips for parents and the larger school community.

## 6. **Recommendations**

*That the Committee:*

1. ***Receives the report; and***
2. ***Notes the content.***

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