

Waikato ENVIROSCHOOLS

Kōanga 2025 edition

He mihi

Welcome to the Waikato Enviroschools newsletter. This pānui has all sorts of resources and ideas, including sustainability tips, upcoming events and inspiring local stories.

We'd like to extend a warm welcome to Waihi College! Nau mai, haere mai ki te whānau o Enviroschools!

We'd also like to congratulate Waikato Waldorf School on their recent holistic reflection. It was a beautiful day where students showcased their mahi to each other, connecting the whole school to their Enviroschools journey.

Last term was full of exciting Enviroschools events for students and teachers. One of our highlights was the annual youth Climate Summit and Leadership Skills Day at Ōtāwhao Marae, Te Awamutu College, which attracted a record number of secondary school students.

We also held our interschool Māra Kai Challenge, with Mātangi, Woodstock, Hukanui and St Columba's schools taking part in the cook-off at Hukanui School and Hamilton's NZMA vocational college.

Students worked hard in the kitchens to prepare some amazing dishes and the meals were plated and presented wonderfully. Lots of effort had also gone into growing, gathering, preserving and

storing produce for the tasty meals. Congratulations to everyone who participated, and a big thank you to Hukanui School for hosting us in your school kitchen.

In Term 3, we'll be celebrating Conservation Week with interschool events in Cambridge, Thames and Tokoroa.

Also, don't miss your chance to apply for [Waikato Enviroschools Funding](#) if you have projects in mind that directly enhance and/or benefit the environment, or provide environmental education. Applications open on 19 August and close on 30 September. Be sure to work with your facilitator if you want to apply!

This term we farewell Sara Taylor and Benoit Midwood-Murray from the Enviroschools team. We thank them for their contributions to the kaupapa and wish them well for the future. We look forward to welcoming new facilitators to the Enviroschools team ready to support schools in Term 4.

We hope this newsletter offers an engaging read. Please feel free to forward it on to any interested colleagues.

Ngā mihi,
The Enviroschools team



Tā mātou mahi | What we do

Enviroschools is a nationwide programme supported by the Toimata Foundation, founding partner Te Mauri Tau, and a large network of regional partners like us here at Waikato Regional Council. It helps support early childhood centres and schools on their long-term sustainability journeys, teaching a generation of young people to value and nurture their natural environment.

Our vision is to create a healthy, peaceful, sustainable world through learning and taking action together.

14 regional partners

219 Enviroschools

**50
ECE centres**

**170
schools**

**55,500
tamariki and students**

**14% of early childhood
60% of primary and intermediate**

**56% of secondary
67% of composite and other**

3 collaborators



Waikato Enviroschools acknowledge our funding partners. Their ongoing input and funding is essential to the success of the Enviroschool programme throughout our region.



Ngā kaupapa e haere ake nei | Opportunities

The events and opportunities below are open to all Enviroschools across the Waikato region. There will also be additional local and district-specific events and opportunities. Your facilitator will be in touch about these directly.

For students

Conservation Week

August and September

We're running events across the region for Conservation Week. These offer an engaging, interactive day for students (and teachers), with lots of learnings that can be brought back and applied at your school. Spaces are limited, so please register your interest below for your preferred location as soon as possible.

28 August, South Waikato - Jim Barnett Reserve

4 September, Hauraki and Coromandel - Kauaeranga Valley

10 September, Central Waikato - Cambridge

Enviroschools holistic reflection

Why not book in a holistic reflection with your facilitator for Term 4?

Our reflection process was significantly revised last year and is now much more flexible.

It can be adapted to suit the needs of your school and can even replace our Term 4 1:1 annual review and goal setting meetings if you prefer.

The new reflection process can also be used by Envirogroups as an opportunity to reflect on projects or reflect as a whole school.

The process honours and celebrates the unique character of your school, while helping to energise your Enviroschools journey!

Speak to your facilitator to organise your next reflection.

For teachers

Using classroom release time (CRT) for Enviroschools activities

Monday, 15 September, 3.30-4.30pm

In this online professional development session, you'll hear from other teachers in the Waikato region who are using CRT to access Enviroschools activities and align their thinking with a whole-school approach.

[Register here.](#)

Other opportunities from NZAEE

Uplifting the vision of young people

Tuesday, 19 August, 4-5pm

Join a webinar discussion about uplifting student voice and vision, including Mātaaitipu | Young People's Vision for Young People from Te Mātaiaho and the importance of children's rights and authentic action within climate change education. Teacher Angie Rayner will share examples of her school's cross-curricular inquiry approach. This values-centred inquiry is focused on empowering ākonga to follow their interests and take positive action to address climate change in the local community and beyond. Links will also be shared to education resources to help support effective teaching and learning.

[Find out more and register here.](#)



He tīwhiri | Quick sustainability tips

Why not make the most of the winter rain by setting up a simple rainwater collection system?

Collected rainwater can be used to water seedlings in your growing shed, prepare for the drier summer months ahead when water is scarcer, or simply to wash muddy gumboots after outdoor adventures!

It's a great way to reduce water use and spark conversations with ākonga about where our water comes from and how we care for it.

Smart Water has set up a [handy guide](#) for installing rainwater harvesting systems. And here's an informative [Enviroschools case study](#) about rainwater harvesting.



Ngā hua | Our stories

Climate Summit cultivates future leaders

To drive positive change for te taiao, tomorrow's champions for sustainable solutions must be effective communicators and collaborators.

That's why a core focus of this year's Climate Summit in May was on leadership skills. The three-day noho marae (overnight stay) event saw students from across the region gather and grow their skills together at Otāwhao Marae, Te Awamutu College.

Rangatahi from Te Aroha College, Hauraki Plains College, Paeroa College and Waikato Waldorf School attended the full summit.

They learnt about the history, science, mātāuranga and impacts of climate change; community projects and climate change adaptation programmes; and the democratic process. They also got the opportunity to plant trees at a local reserve and visited Te Awamutu's community food forest.

On day two, they were joined by students from Waikato Dio, St Peter's Cambridge, Te Awamutu College, Waihi College and Thames High.

Through a range of exciting sessions, the rangatahi explored local solutions and honed the skills needed to drive collective action.

They learnt how to influence within a community setting and reflected on tools to support effective communication around challenging situations or topics, exploring different communication styles and approaches.

Before heading back to their schools and communities, the students also identified practical steps they could take to create a more sustainable future. We're really excited to follow their journeys and upcoming actions. Watch this space.



Inspiring plantathons at Pirongia and Elstow-Waihou

When it comes to planting, students at Pirongia and Elstow-Waihou schools really know how to go the distance. Students at Pirongia School have been planting the same farm for over 10 years! And, recently, Elstow-Waihou students put in a huge effort planting 581 native trees in one day.

Their mahi took place at Rowe farm, alongside the Waihou River in Te Aroha, and they had support from local farmers, Piako Waihou Catchment Trust and WaiConnect. The focus was on improving the health of waterways to increase biodiversity.

The students at Elstow-Waihou are now expert planters, having extended native planting within their school grounds, too. Lots of schools are involved in native planting and restoration projects at this time of year. If you have a planting project you'd like to tell us about, please contact your facilitator.



Striking gold with zero waste workshops



Sometimes value is hidden in unexpected places, as students from Coromandel-based schools recently discovered.

“There’s gold in e-waste?” questioned one student, who was examining a circuit board carefully, curiosity well and truly piqued.

As they soon discovered, pound for pound, e-waste can contain more gold than traditionally mined gold ore.

It was all part of a *Designing for Zero Waste* workshop hosted by Whenuakite School, and attended by students from Mercury Bay Area School, Coroglen School and Te Rerenga School.

The rich vein of thought-provoking insights continued as students dug deep into a range of interrelated topics.

They began with a buried waste dig, discovering which everyday items had broken down and which hadn’t. From there, they engaged in a series of sessions on material life cycles, product design and sorting systems, as well as exploring biodegradability and worm farming.

The day of learning was all about giving rangatahi the opportunity to question, reflect and imagine change. The students left energised by the prospects for their schools, with clear actions agreed for relaunching compost systems, zero waste lunch challenges and waste education at assemblies.

Compost mentis: exploring mindful ways to nourish the soil

Waste doesn’t have to go to, well ... waste.

With a little knowhow and a willingness to get your hands dirty, it can play a valuable part in growing food, restoring ecosystems and caring for the environment.

Over the past two terms, Upper Atiamuri School has been working closely with their EnviroSchools facilitator to progress their sustainability journey. And their garden-to-table approach has provided a wonderful means to grow their knowledge.

Students first focused on growing vegetables in their gardens and setting up a worm farm. And, by the end of term, they were busy regenerating garden beds in preparation for spring planting.

Next, they worked together to dig trenches, ready for their first ever bokashi trial. Bokashi is a type of anaerobic composting that allows for faster breakdown of food waste. It can be done in a smaller space than regular composting and doesn’t produce unpleasant odours or attract pests.

The students had been collecting food scraps from the school kitchen, and from home, for a while to add to their bokashi supply. But this was their first opportunity to return the food waste to the soil.

In garden areas without trenches, students used worm leachate, collected from their newly established worm farm, to nourish the soil. They learnt about how diluting the liquid (to the colour of weak tea) resulted in nutrient benefits for both soil health and plant growth.

The session ended with a well-deserved kai of pumpkin soup and scones. Cami reckons it is the best pumpkin soup they’ve ever tasted.





Cultural connections run deep in Taupō testing

The year 13 biology class at Tauhara College has been learning about local waterways for their standard NCEA assessments – although the geothermal water testing day they were treated to in their own back yard was anything but standard.

With the support of mana whenua, the day began with a mihi whakatāu organised at the local marae.

Enviroschools Facilitator Benoir Midwood-Murray acted as the school's kaikōrero, gifting a native tree as their koha, and the traditional welcome set the tone for a very special day.

Following proceedings at the marae, the group ventured to the riparian margins of the Tahārepa and Ōnekeneke streams, where hapū representative Te Moananui shared traditional ecological knowledge.

Students then undertook their assessed water clarity, stream flow and pH tests, which were evaluated by their teachers, Amy and Kiko. To measure stream flow (velocity), Benoir showed students how they could use pumice instead of ping pong balls and leaves instead of corks – connecting with the environment by using its materials.

They then ventured up to the Debrett's hot pools, a commercial business that leases land from the hapū in a traditional bathing area.

The spring is the source of the Ōnekeneke Stream and Benoir and Te Moananui shared the history and cultural significance of the area.

After a short walk identifying native plant species, they arrived at the catchment pond where they continued their testing.

The day was rounded out with a karakia before the students and teachers walked back to Tauhara College.

The students were blown away. Their biology assessment was in the bag and they'd been immersed in a rich cultural experience.

Tests are anything but dull at Tauhara.

He rauemi | Resource spotlight

Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori

In 2025, Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori (Māori language week) runs from 14 to 20 September.

The booklet *Kia Kaha te Reo Taiao*, developed in collaboration with the Department of Conservation and the Ministry of Education to provide information about the natural world, is a great resource to help the language thrive.

The booklet can be downloaded on the [Reo Māori website](#) along with beautiful posters about fauna, freshwater, and marine environments.



Zero waste warriors at Ōtaua School

Ōtaua School is a wonderful example of how a whole-school approach can support a thriving, student-led zero waste culture.

With no general rubbish bins on site, tamariki take responsibility for their own waste, including taking lunch scraps home.

Waste that remains is carefully sorted. A team of Nature Warriors collects paper recycling from the classrooms each week, checking for contamination and awarding points for correct sorting.

The 'switched-on' light bulb trophy is awarded at assembly to the class with the cleanest recycling, turning waste awareness into a collaborative challenge.

Clean paper is collected in Kleensaks and transported by the school to a local printers for recycling.

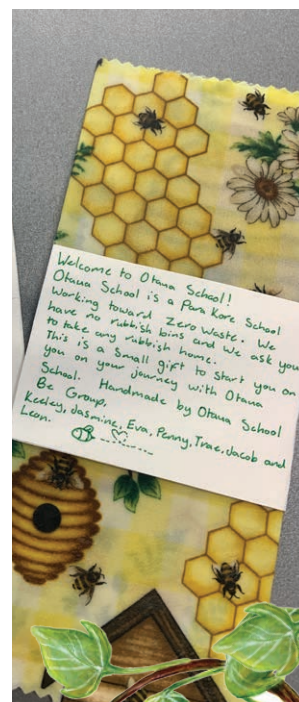
The school also uses a worm farm and compost bins to handle organic waste, supported by kitchen scraps and donated fruit skins. The resulting castings nourish their vegetable gardens.

Ōtaua's Bee Group makes beeswax wraps as part of new enrolment packs, sharing the message that Ōtaua is proud to be working toward zero waste.

Regular visits to the Waiuku Zero Waste Community Recycling Centre help deepen students' understanding of waste streams and local solutions.

As an act of community care, the School's Nature Warriors also organised a recent cleanup at Maioro Forest beach, collecting three ute-loads of rubbish.

For these students, waste education isn't just about what goes in the bin. It's about collaboratively, creatively and consistently taking action for te taiao.



Ngā ringa hāpai | Enviroschools Waikato facilitation team

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Back row, left to right: Sara, Alex, Cami
Middle row, left to right: Michelle, Anna, Jenni
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Find out more

enviroschools.org.nz

Check out the great selection of national news, resources and ideas in the team area. To register, head to 'team area login' and click 'register'. Please note that you will need your school/centre's MoE number to complete the registration process. You can find this at educationcounts.govt.nz.

Waikato Enviroschools Facebook

facebook.com/groups/waikatoenviroschools

Join our friendly and supportive closed forum to share inspiration, thoughts, learnings and more.



Waikato Enviroschools acknowledge our funding partners. Their ongoing input and funding is essential to the success of the Enviroschool programme throughout our region.

