

Support for the Environmental Education Policy: English



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Introduction

This document complements the *Environmental Education Policy for Schools* and should be read in conjunction with the support document, *Implementing Environmental Education in your school*. It has been specially prepared for secondary teachers who are responsible for implementing syllabuses in the English key learning area.

The policy requires schools to maximise every opportunity to draw on the formal and informal curriculum in order to develop students' capacity to support an ecologically sustainable world.

Each faculty in your school is asked to:

- identify and address those outcomes in Board of Studies syllabuses K-12 which are specific to environmental education
- integrate the teaching of environmental education topics and issues to support outcomes in other Board of Studies syllabuses
- use the opportunities provided by special events and actions of the school community to enhance those student learning outcomes related to environmental education
- contribute to the development and implementation of the school environmental management plan.

The policy has three focus areas, each of which can be supported by the activities, projects and curriculum programs developed by teachers in all key learning areas in your school. The focus areas are:

- curriculum
- management of resources, and
- management of school grounds.

This document makes specific references to the English KLA and provides ideas and examples of how your faculty can contribute to each of these focus areas.



OBJECTIVES OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The objectives of environmental education are summarised below. Wherever possible, you are encouraged to link the appropriate objectives to the achievement of outcomes in the syllabuses you teach.

Curriculum objectives

Students will develop:

- knowledge and understandings about:
 - ❖ the nature and function of ecosystems and how they are interrelated (K1)
 - ❖ the impact of people on environments (K2)
 - ❖ the role of the community, politics and market forces in environmental decision-making (K3)
 - ❖ the principles of ecologically sustainable development (K4) and
 - ❖ career opportunities associated with the environment (K5)
- skills in:
 - ❖ applying technical skills within an environmental context (S1)
 - ❖ identifying and assessing environmental problems (S2)
 - ❖ communicating environmental problems to others (S3)
 - ❖ resolving environmental problems (S4)
 - ❖ adopting behaviours and practices that protect the environment (S5)
 - ❖ evaluating the success of their actions (S6)
- a respect for all life on Earth (V1)
- an appreciation of their cultural heritage (V2) and
- a commitment to act for the environment by supporting long-term solutions to environmental problems (V3).

ENGLISH AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Stage 4 & 5

Unlike most other syllabuses in New South Wales, the English Stage 4-5 syllabus does not have mandated content.

For this reason, it is not easy for the English syllabus outcomes to be aligned with particular units of work or areas of study that allow the *Environmental Education Policy for Schools* to be realised through the English key learning area.

It is possible, however, for English teachers to support a whole-school approach to environmental education by selecting texts that satisfy the rigour required of the English syllabus outcomes while, at the same time, having content or themes based on environmental issues.

Texts with an environmental theme

A very small selection of texts with an environmental theme is listed below. English teachers will be able to add texts of their own choosing to this list.

Non-Fiction

- *Medicine Man*
Theme: Search for medicines and forest destruction
- *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson (1962)
Theme: the effect of pesticides and insecticides on songbird population in the United States.

Fiction

- *The lake at the end of the world* by Caroline Macdonald
Theme: a world almost destroyed by environmental pollution.
- *Lockie Leonard, Scumbuster* by Tim Winton
Theme: Industry and the environment.

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- *Walking the Boundaries* and *Beyond the Boundaries* by Jacki French
Theme: Environmental protection
- *Other Facts of Life* by Morris Gleitzman
Theme: Environmental awareness
- *The Cay* by Theodore Taylor
Theme: Living with the environment
- *Z for Zachariah* by Robert O'Brien
Theme: survival after the nuclear holocaust.

Film

- *Soylent Green*
Theme: Over-population
- *Waterworld* (Kevin Costner)
Theme: A futuristic view of a world covered by water because of the hole in the ozone layer
- *Silkwood*
Theme: Nuclear waste
- *Erin Brokavitch*
Theme: Pollution of community water supplies.

Song lyrics

- Performers such as *Midnight Oil*

Texts such as these allow teachers to explore environmental issues by examining such aspects as:

- the point of view from which the text is written or directed
- debating or discussing alternative points of view
- the language used by the author to position the reader in a particular way
- the techniques used by a director to position a viewer.

READING AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The following tables identify sites in the Stages 4 and 5 English syllabus where the subject matter of environmental education could become the content of English teaching. Similar teaching applies at both stages, with increasing sophistication expected at Stage 5.

Stages 4 & 5
<p><i>Students should be able to explain the effect of particular print styles, handwriting, layout, headings, subheadings and illustrations(Stage 4)... and make judgements on their effectiveness (Stage 5)</i></p>
<p>A collection of information about environmental issues and about environmental groups from a variety of perspectives would provide excellent subject matter for these outcomes. Collecting this information could be the responsibility of both teacher and students.</p> <p>Once the material is collected, a class discussion could draw on the many different examples, identifying print styles, etc. to start with, then talking about the effect and relating this discussion to the purpose of the different texts.</p> <p>Each student would be demonstrating his or her independence by dealing with a different text and contributing on the basis of that text.</p> <p>Making judgements could begin with a ranking from most effective to least effective, keeping the purpose in mind, and continuing with a discussion of the reasons for the ranking.</p>
<p><i>Students should be able to identify bias and attitudes ...in written texts (Stage 4) and to analyse bias and attitudes in written texts (Stage 5)</i></p>
<p>Using the same collection of texts the teacher models the identification of words that carry bias. A chart is drawn up of contrasting pairs. If the texts don't provide all such pairs, students may be able to suggest them as a word-building exercise. Students take a text of their own choosing and highlight bias words. A class discussion follows, with students talking about their identified words.</p> <p>In analysis, students answer such questions as "Whose interests does this text serve? What makes me think this?" "Whose views are not represented?" "How does this fit in with the writer's purpose?" Students should be required to justify their responses.</p>

Environmental education objectives and writing

Stage 4	Stage 5
<p><i>Students should be able to use writing for such personal, intellectual and social purposes as self-exploration, investigation of the world, formulating ideas and logical thinking, arguing and exposition</i></p>	<p><i>Students should be able to use writing to analyse, synthesise and generalise in the contexts of everyday communication and personal expression, literature and mass media</i></p>
<p>Having read the material collected in the reading tasks, students now use their knowledge and understanding of the use of the language of bias to argue an environmental issue (e.g. "renewable energy is a viable option in Australia"). Students create an audience for themselves: "Who am I writing for?"</p> <p>Synthesise the material in the reading task, and any other information, into a feature article. (The class will have looked at feature articles in other contexts and will know how they are constructed.) Select a specified audience or a specified magazine or newspaper and ensure that you write for that audience.</p>	
<p><i>Students should be able to use writing to influence others.</i></p>	<p><i>Students should be able to use writing to influence individuals, groups, situations and events in a social context.</i></p>

Stage 4	Stage 5
Students decide on a local environmental issue and write a letter to the editor of the local paper.	
<i>Students should be able to use writing to record information for self and others</i>	<i>Students should be able to use writing to record and order information from written, spoken or observed texts</i>
Use this opportunity to develop note-making skills in students. Identify the possible formats: matrix, mind map, dot point, flowchart and discuss occasions when each one suits best. Record and order information from visual texts: after watching a video or a movie such as <i>Erin Brokavitch</i> . Record information from the viewing in response to questions generated by the students before the viewing.	
Students make notes on a mind-map and use a coding system to categorise the notes ready for writing.	
<i>Students should be able to develop confidence over a range of registers</i>	<i>Students should be able to develop the capacity to choose and shift register within particular situations and for particular purposes</i>
Ask students to write a conversation about an environmental issue, write a submission to a government department and a 2-minute speech to the class about the same issue. Discuss the different purposes, audiences and choices of language and approach.	

Environmental education objectives and mass media

Stage 4	Stage 5
<i>Students should be able to describe the ways in which language is used to support purpose, audience, and situation in mass media.</i>	<i>Students should be able to identify the purpose, audience, and situation of a range of mass media products.</i>
Ask students to collect a range of examples of environmental themes from a variety of media. Working in groups, they identify the purpose and audience of each one and highlight or record the words that they used as clues. Each group prepares a report on their findings to share with the class, using at least three different media.	
<i>Students should be able to identify such strategies in mass media production as selection and omission of materials, ideas and issues.</i>	<i>Students should be able to explain how the selection process affects meaning.</i>
Students collect as many media reports on the same environmental event as possible. They use a matrix to record key information from each source. Identify omissions, contradictions, and interpretations. They also identify the indisputable facts and identify biases.	
<i>Students should be able to identify the typical ways in which the mass media present some people and events.</i>	<i>Students should be able to explain how the conventional presentation of people, events, ideas and issues affects the meaning of a mass media product.</i>
<p><i>In the collection of media articles, students identify ways in which environmentalists are represented. They make a thesaurus of words in two columns: positive and negative.</i></p> <p><i>Manipulate the feel of a piece by changing the language.</i></p> <p><i>Discussion: Is there such a thing as neutral language?</i></p>	

Environmental education objectives and mass media—*cont.*

Stage 4	Stage 5
<i>Students should be able to show how the view of the world presented in a mass media product may differ from the student's own experience.</i>	<i>Students should be able to outline the reasons for the differences between a view of the world presented in a mass media product and actuality.</i>
<p>Students collect instances of the media presentation of aspects of the environment.</p> <p>After modelling the process, ask students to draw up a chart for themselves and beside each instance to articulate their own experience in relation to each environmental aspect.</p>	
<i>Students should be able to observe the ways in which selection and formatting affect meaning.</i>	<i>Students should be able to explain how meaning is constructed by the selection, editing and formatting processes.</i>
<p>As a whole class and using the media material collected earlier, students offer alternative suggestions about what could have been included, how it could have been formatted, what could have been left out, what other images could have been used. For each suggestion, discuss the effect on meaning.</p>	

Environmental education objectives and spoken language

Stage 4	Stage 5
<i>Students should be able to talk to and negotiate with others</i>	<i>Students should be able to talk to and negotiate with others with increased confidence and awareness of the dynamics of the situation</i>
<p>Identify a number of different points of view in the class about an environmental issue. Use these as a starting point for discussion. Parameters for the discussion can be set in a number of different ways: uninterrupted; anything goes, be as passionate as you like; be rational and calm.</p> <p>Discuss the process at each point and come up with a Protocol for effective discussions, to be used by the class. Such a process develops awareness of the dynamics of the situation.</p>	
<i>Students should be able to talk to explore ideas with others including solving problems, modifying opinions and developing arguments.</i>	<i>Students should be able to talk to elaborate complex and abstract ideas with others, including solving problems, modifying opinions and developing arguments.</i>
<p>Focus attention on developing arguments. Investigate the ways people who are able to persuade effectively back up their arguments in samples collected, (e.g. by means of anecdotes, statistics, case studies, facts, scenarios, historical facts).</p> <p>Identify environmental problems. In groups, work out possible solutions. Begin with a group brainstorm (anything goes) and end with a series of recommendations to an appropriate body. For each recommendation provide attachments to back them up.</p>	

Stage 6

The Stage 6 syllabus does have mandated content, but the text choice is so broad that teachers will find scope for addressing environmental issues within the context of the mandated content.