

Explaining the Steps to Ecological Dialogue: Level 2

Please note that the steps are not necessarily completed in this order as you may form your steering committee first. (Step 2) Secondly this is not yet rated as a 2,3 or 4 star achievement.

- Step One:** The school organises a staff spirituality day located in a natural setting. It contains elements which enable staff to reflect upon their connectivity to nature, such as a reflective walk with discussion points along the way. Input before and after makes links to Laudato Si quotes such as, what does it mean to ‘till and to keep’ the earth? enabling broad discussion and responses about modern economics, our throw away society and capitalism versus an indigenous view of sustainability and kinship.
- The day concludes with a liturgy that brings all elements of the day linking to the school’s mission and Charism. This would complete Step 1: Formation of the Heart (a) and (b) with evidence of pictures and a program of the day with staff feedback.
- Step 2** Form a steering committee from students, staff and parents. A student led committee (with staff mentors) and with cross representation from all year levels for engagement and reporting back is a higher quality result. Meetings are held at least every term.
- Step 3** Undertake an environmental audit of what your school has achieved to date in caring for our common home. An early years, primary or secondary audit is available. From this a theme of waste is identified and a deeper audit of waste conducted.
- An action plan is made with timeframes for particular goals each with targets and responsibilities distributed. Multiple themes each year can be undertaken for schools with existing actions in place or alternatively separate action plans for student, staff and admin around the same theme. E.g. The theme of Waste
- Step 4** Consult, involve and communicate with stakeholders through things such as newsletters, assemblies and on a dedicated notice board. e.g. Inclusive practices in the design phase will bring everyone along with you. What problem are you trying to solve and how can you solve it? What measures indicate success?
- Step 5** Manage around issues and promote good practices by ensuring all decision makers are kept informed and consulted.
- Step 6** Choose an easy goal first and communicate its success, affirming positive behaviour. e.g. conduct an audit after first intervention to measure change. Report this and build momentum for more change.
- Step 7** Implement the plan step by step using good communication for updates. e.g. mark progress with announcements using graphs etc. on your notice board and through the newsletter.
- Step 8:** The school organises a sharing event or may participate in an interschool summit. v

Sample School Case Study: Level 2

At St James', a group of students belonging to the Earthcare committee of students, parents and staff, are working towards improving behaviours and practices which protect the environment. After conducting an environmental review at the start of the year they identify waste as their target issue. A more detailed audit is undertaken by a year level where it is integrated into their curriculum, with results shared across the school using assemblies, the notice board and newsletter.

The following plans were included in the School's Action Plan with timeframes, responsibilities allocated and targets set.

- conduct 'No Waste' 'nude food' lunch day once a week to reduce reliance upon an expensive dumpster, saving this money for the work of the Earthcare committee.
- conduct a Clean up Australia challenge to reduced lunch waste by 30% in one week using education at assemblies on ways to reduce wrappings on lunches and food wastage.
- look at additional ways to increase the amounts of recycling
- introduce a 'Cartridge Rescue' recycling bin for printer/toner ink collection
- collect PET, glass and aluminium recycling for cash to help the environment budget or donate to Vinnies to help the poor.
- purchase compost bins and introduce composting and take shredded paper to a local pet shop or for use in garden mulching.
- purchase a worm farm for the school using a grant or budget allocation.
- do another waste audit in August to determine the effect of school actions.

The group approached the P&F Association which agreed to fund the purchase of needed items such as worm farm and compost bins. The team has observed that there is still some litter in the playground which may be associated with canteen purchases.

As a result of the team's planning, it has been observed that practices within the school are changing and that students have benefitted from the authentic learning opportunities offered by the associated activities. Because the student team drives the actions and documents planning in the management plan, improved practices should continue within the school, providing communication is maintained. The students create a jingle and video clip to celebrate their successes.

The staff undertook a spirituality day located in a bush setting to understand local indigenous culture and history including caring for country. The day also had elements of Laudato Si' dotted through activities to bring theology and moral obligation into discussion. Staff then highlighted aspects of their RE program that could support student learning in Caring for our Common Home.

The school celebrated their environmental achievements on the feast of St Francis' with a prayer assembly, having also celebrated the Season of Creation with a school liturgy.

Next year the aim is to use the worm farms and composting to create no dig gardens, sell the worm wee fertiliser to parents and generate pesto for the making of pesto bread in the school tuckshop along with other vegetables and herbs, managed by year levels that integrate the school garden into their curriculum. The school will have a goal of a garden per year level to accommodate different functions such as quick crops like lettuce, rocket, radish, potatoes and courgettes require little maintenance, making them a perfect starting point for a school vegetable patch. Tomatoes add colour; while garlic, spring onions, mint and rosemary are great for adding flavour to school meals.

This program will include a healthy eating / nutrition program for the students and a review of the school tuckshop menu.