

Hukanui Primary School

The Living Room

Project Overview

This overview tells the story of an ambitious, student-led, environmental education initiative to plan, design and build an eco-classroom at Hukanui Primary School in Hamilton. It is the first project of its type in New Zealand and was conceived, planned and progressed by Year 5 and 6 students.

Genesis

Hukanui has been an Enviroschool since 1998, so students are used to thinking about, and working on, environmental action projects. It was the environmental education electives group, led by Hukanui's enviro teacher Michelle White, that first identified the need for a dedicated environmental education space at the school that exemplified the principles of sustainability. A working group of interested students was also set up to help progress the idea, and the project began.

Succession

Because the project has spanned five years, each planning step has been carefully researched and documented by the students. In this way, essential information has been passed on to the next year group so they could continue with the project. Each step has been linked to the New Zealand Curriculum, and the integrated approach taken in the project has meant there have been excellent opportunities to engage with the key competencies of the curriculum.

Action

The "green light" was given to build the eco-classroom by the Hukanui Primary School Board of Trustees in 2007, and fundraising began. The efforts of the environmental education electives group and working group have attracted numerous project sponsors, such as WWF-New Zealand, so that construction is now due to commence. It is hoped that the eco-classroom will be completed in 2009.

The eco-classroom is designed to minimise the negative impacts on the environment through the use of innovative building design, practices and materials. Students have researched various means of achieving this and included the following points in their design brief:



- built to make the most of natural sunlight and heat
- solar water heating system for the school pool
- rainwater collection tanks
- natural ventilation – large opening doors and skylights
- double-glazed windows to prevent heat loss in winter and remain cool in summer
- concrete floors to absorb energy during the day and release it at night
- untreated timber sourced from sustainable plantations
- environmentally friendly insulation used from wool and recycled plastic
- biodiversity friendly, with plans that have minimal impact on the site and maximum care for the surrounding habitats during the building process
- a sustainable outside, including native tree planting, nursery, vegetable garden, beehives, bird feeders and a new location for existing recycling systems.

More information

Elective unit plan – Enviro teacher Michelle White’s curriculum planning document (see Hukanui Unit Plan)

What is a sustainable school? – Guiding principles of the EnviroSchool’s whole school sustainability approach (http://www.enviroschools.org.nz/how_it_works/#school)

Hukanui School eco-classroom sponsorship form – The sponsorship form used to raise funds for the project (see Hukanui Sponsorship Form)

Enviroschools project overview – An overview of the project by Enviroschools (see Hukanui Enviroschools Project Overview)

Action planning – Tools that will help you organise your project and plan for action (http://www.enviroschools.org.nz/youth_jam/youth_jam_08/youth_jam_resources/action_planning/)

