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Committee Regional Sustainability Committee
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Take Action Annual Report 2008-09

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee of the activities and achievements of schools involved in the Take Action programme during the 2008-09 year.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report **do not** trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

Take Action, Greater Wellington's environmental education programme for Year 5 – 8 students, is available free to all schools in the Greater Wellington region. The two teaching and learning programmes available are Take Action for Water and Take Action for Air.

Both programmes are facilitated by council staff involving both teacher training and working alongside teachers and students on field trips and in class. With the Take Action for Water programme being updated and reprinted late last year, 2009 schools have been working with the new Take Action for Water teaching and learning programme.

The performance indicator for Take Action requires the programme to be implemented to the satisfaction of the Council and within budget.

4. Uptake of Take Action

In the 2008-09 year approximately 1890 students from 21 schools participated in Take Action. Schools that worked with the Take Action for Water programme in the later part of 2008 were the last schools to work with the original programme. All 2009 schools have worked with the updated programme.

Take Action programmes continue to be very popular with schools in the region with some already booked in for 2010. Recruitment meetings to fill the remaining places for the 2010 calendar year will begin shortly.

As Table 1 shows, schools from all territorial authorities participated in the programme which resulted in a reasonably even spread across the region.

Table 1: 2008-09 schools undertaking Take Action by territorial authority

Territorial Authority	Schools participating in Take Action
Carterton District	Gladstone School
Kapiti Coast District	Kenakena School
Hutt City	Avalon Intermediate Hutt Intermediate Muritai School (middle syndicate) Muritai School (senior syndicate) St Bernadette's School Waterloo School
Masterton District	Masterton Intermediate School
Porirua City	Holy Family School
South Wairarapa	Greytown School Kahutara School South End School
Upper Hutt	Oxford Crescent School Silverstream School St Brendan's School
Wellington City	Karori West Normal School Kilbirnie School Northland School Ridgway School Samuel Marsden Collegiate St Anne's School

5. Take Action highlights

5.1 Successful uptake of the new Take Action for Water programme

With a new school curriculum being circulated and our existing Take Action for Water programme coming up to seven years old, it was timely that in 2008 we updated the Take Action for Water programme. The new programme has been incredibly successful with schools providing very positive and enthusiastic feedback.

Greater Wellington staff working with the Take Action for Water programme have also noticed a real enhancement in learning outcomes when working with students on the updated programme. Students are demonstrating a much greater understanding of their catchment and how the actions of their community impact on the living ecosystems and waterways that support them.

5.2 Future direction

With the new Take Action for Water programme taking a wider catchment based approach, this has encouraged staff to reconsider how we facilitate the Take Action programme. It has been decided to trial a catchment-based approach to our school facilitation, which will allow each staff member to become more familiar with one particular catchment in the Wellington area. This will enable Greater Wellington staff to form stronger relationships with local councils, local Enviroschool facilitators, local community restoration groups, local iwi, local businesses and most importantly, local environmental issues. It is envisaged that this will add greater value to action project work carried out by the schools.

5.3 Action project work in schools and communities

Schools continue to tackle a wide range of environmental action projects as students utilise their new learning and understanding to plan out project work that in some way ‘takes action’ for the environment. With the new ‘whole catchment’ approach to the Take Action for Water programme, students have become more interested in the role of plants in our catchments, more specifically, their role in stream health and providing animal habitat. This theme area (biodiversity) is currently the most popular action project theme chosen by students and their teachers.

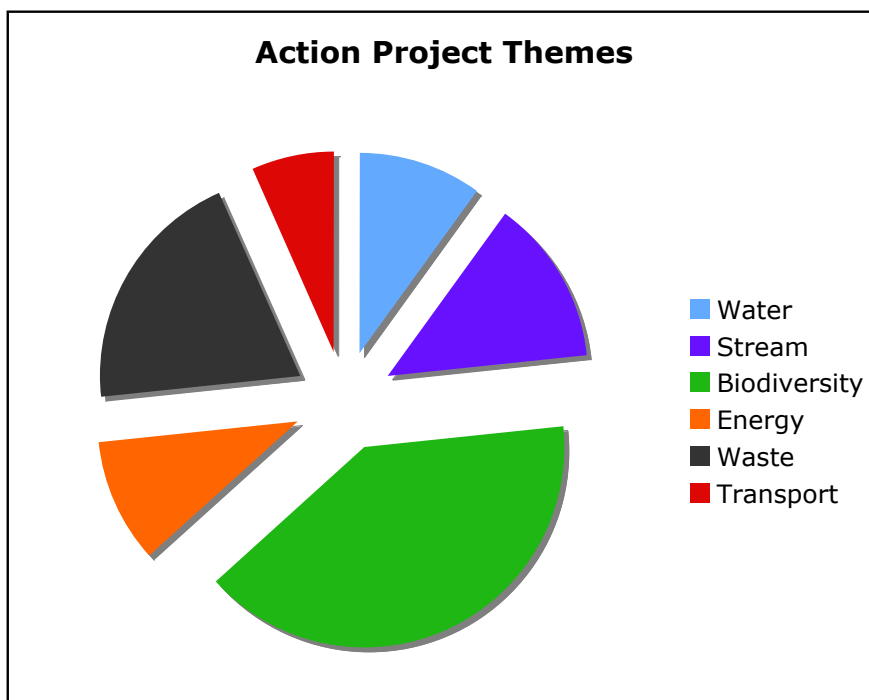


Figure 1: Spread of action projects across main theme areas

Schools continue to show a keen interest in participating in local restoration projects and where appropriate staff endeavour to make links between the Take Action and Take Care programmes, which enables schools to participate in planting and working bee sessions at Care Group sites, while the Care Groups enjoy the extra ‘people power’ to get the work done.

Several of our Take Action schools have gone on to make a long term commitment to local restoration projects by growing native seedlings for the projects that the students then take back annually to plant on site. Examples of these include Kenakena and Waikanae Schools working with the Waikanae Estuary Care Group, Wainuioru School working with a local farmer on his QE2 covenant and Greytown School working with the Papawai Stream Care Group. Wainuioru School have taken things one step further and this small rural school in the Wairarapa have adopted a threatened plant (*Oleria Gardenerii*) which they propagate and grow on in an attempt to raise both its status and number in their community.

Energy action projects are slowly gathering momentum with our Take Action schools as students become ‘Energy Detectives’ and investigate how energy is currently being wasted in their school. By finding the wastage they can conserve energy and make a difference for the environment. GW staff support energy action project work by assisting students monitor their energy use and by providing and promoting tools to monitor and conserve energy use.

Waste action projects have always been popular with our Take Action schools and are quite often the ‘starting point’ for schools that are new to integrating environmental education perspectives into their teaching and learning programmes. Rubbish in playgrounds appears to be a universal problem and by handing the ‘problem’ over to the students to solve, an increased ownership in the project is achieved. By reducing rubbish going to landfill students can save the school money with their waste removal while at the same time produce rich compost and worm fertiliser that can be used on school organic vege gardens or in their shade houses.

Worm farms and compost bins are becoming more commonplace in our local schools with students putting their lunch time scraps and leftovers to good use in their school gardens. With the Take Action process, students have a greater understanding of how their action project work helps their environment, namely, their catchment.

5.4 Meridian Action Project Fund

When Meridian Energy came on board to support the Take Action for Water programme in 2008, they agreed to fund a new Take Action project fund of \$10,000 per annum for three years. This enables schools to take on larger environmental projects and support their students to turn their more ambitious action plans into reality.

Already this year, Plateau School (Upper Hutt) were granted funds to rid their school playing ground of the pest plant *tradescantia* and re-plant with native plants. Students consulted with local Forest and Bird members for advice on

which native plants would best suit the site and then purchased these plants from the group at a much-reduced rate. Biosecurity staff were on hand to give advice and organise contract sprayers to prepare the site for planting. The whole school were involved with planting and mulching/maintaining the planting site. This maintenance work continues to be carried out by students.

Another school to receive funding is Kenakena School (Kapiti Coast) who are working to extend their school shade house to enable students to propagate and grow their own plants. Kenakena School students claim they 'want to increase the biodiversity in our school by planting native plants'. Funding will also go towards constructing cold frames for growing on seedlings and tools and equipment to enable students to carry out this work.

Greytown School have just recently applied for funding to restore koura habitat to their school stream. Kilbirnie School have also applied for funding to establish an organic vege garden and rain water collection tank project.

5.5 Enviroschools partnership

Following the council decision to support the Enviroschools programme at a Regional Co-ordinator level, our relationship with Enviroschools has stepped up a notch. With a recent update of the Enviroschools kit, a revamp of the Enviroschools Award process, along with a catchment approach to the facilitation of the Take Action programme, there is more opportunity than ever before for a reciprocal relationship between the Take Action and Enviroschool teams in the Wellington region.

The Environmental Education team are meeting regularly with Enviroschool facilitators to investigate ways in which we can work cooperatively to help local schools achieve quality education and action project outcomes.

5.6 Community communication

An effort this year has gone into strategic communication about the Take Action programme. Media releases about specific project outcomes have enabled clear and accurate communication about both the Take Action programme and student achievements in local papers across the region. Support received from our Environment Communications Advisor has also seen the development of information flyers for both the Greater Wellington Environmental Awards, open to local schools, and the Meridian Take Action Fund. A Take Action newsletter has also been trailed which may merge with the regional Enviroschools newsletter in the future.

6. Conclusion

2008/09 year has been another very successful one for the Take Action programme. Schools continue to see the programme as an extremely worthwhile teaching and learning opportunity for their students and this is reflected in the 'full quota' of schools that we currently have, as well as our annual waiting list.

Looking ahead to 2009/10 year, the Education team look forward to another busy year while also building relationships within our regions catchments as we trial our new catchment approach to facilitation of the programme.

7. **Communication**

The achievements of the schools described in this report have been described throughout the year in local newspapers and magazines. As this is a summary report no further communication is considered necessary.

8. **Recommendations**

That the Committee:

1. ***Receives the report.***
2. ***Notes the content of the report.***

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