

Enhancing Education Programs at the Port Phillip EcoCentre

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WPI

The growth of the EcoCentre calls for new analysis



“

How are we going to teach the younger generation to care for [the] environment?

”

~ *Educator*

**Environmental
citizenship
empowers
students by
enabling skills to
take sustainability
action**

Connection to the environment

Individual responsibility

Decision-making and action-taking

Project Goal

To support the development of the Next Gen Education Framework by reviewing the impacts of three of the EcoCentre's educational programs: Teachers' Environment Network (TEN), Tomorrow's Leaders for Sustainability (TLfS), and Excursions.

TEN connects educators to promote sustainability



TLfS engages students and builds leaders



Connect with Educators

Engage and Learn

Project Impacts

The EcoCentre offers excursions that facilitate nature-based learning



Biodiversity and Ecosystems



Marine Ecosystems and Human Impacts



War on Waste

Methodology

Method 1: Workshop with Education Manager and the Education Programs Coordinator at the EcoCentre



Aims

Objectives

Outcomes

Method 2: Analyzing Evaluation Forms from TEN, TLfS, and Excursions



Method 3: Focus Groups with TEN and TLfS participants

4 Focus Groups with Educators

Long-term program impacts and outcomes

Desired content and skills

Exit Survey (TEN only)



Results, Analysis, and Recommendations

Agenda

1

TEN

- Aims, Objectives, Outcomes
- Results and Analysis
- Recommendations

2

TLfS

- Aims, Objectives, Outcomes
- Results and Analysis
- Recommendations

3

Excursions

- Results and Analysis
- Recommendations

4

Final
Recommendations

Teachers' Environment Network

Aim:

To **build** a **network** of connected and knowledgeable **educators** who can deliver strong **sustainability** and **environmental** education in their **schools**.

Objectives

1

To provide **high-quality** professional learning **experiences** that reflect expertise and innovation in sustainability and environmental education.

2

To foster a supportive, positive and collaborative **network** where teachers share knowledge, ideas and resources.

3

To tailor professional development sessions to teachers' specific **interests** and desired areas of **growth** in environmental and sustainability education.

4

To provide high quality **resources** to support teachers to implement sustainability in their programs at school.

Outcomes

1

Teachers are **implementing** high-impact sustainability and environmental **activities** and programs in their **schools**.

2

Teachers feel **supported** and **inspired** by the sessions and peers in the TEN network.

3

Teachers **share** successes, challenges, lessons and resources with **peers** in the Teachers' Environment Network.

4

Teachers **attend** TEN sessions on a **regular basis** and the network has a high retention rate.

TEN provides teachers with high-quality and informative professional learning opportunities

Objective 1: Professional learning experiences

15%

of evaluation form respondents participated in TEN for the professional development

But... **62%** of evaluation form respondents said they participate because of topical interests

“Offered a variety of strategies that have been proven in the school setting.”

Teachers find the networking aspect of TEN to be beneficial

Objective 2: Supportive, positive and collaborative network for teachers share

Of the 84 evaluation form respondents...

24% participate in
TEN to network

13% said that the
networking opportunities were
what was done best

"I realized that it's not so much the information, but it's the connecting with others and learning about... what they're doing in their schools."

"Connecting with like minded teachers is a powerful way to motivate and be inspired."

Teachers are looking for a stronger focus on local content and skills during future sessions

Objective 3: Tailor sessions to teachers' interests

Content

Australia's First Peoples

Habitat Gardens

Indigenous Plants



Skills

Grant Writing Skills

Classroom Resources

Running Environmental Audits

Student Engagement

Policy Development

Forming a Green Team

TEN supplies teachers with resources to implement into their classroom but they are not all being used

Objective 4: Providing resources

Out of **84** educators

11 said resources were a highlight

9 said they wanted more resources

Only 2 of 7 focus group participants are currently using the resources provided by TEN in their classroom

Indigenous Once
As It Was Poster

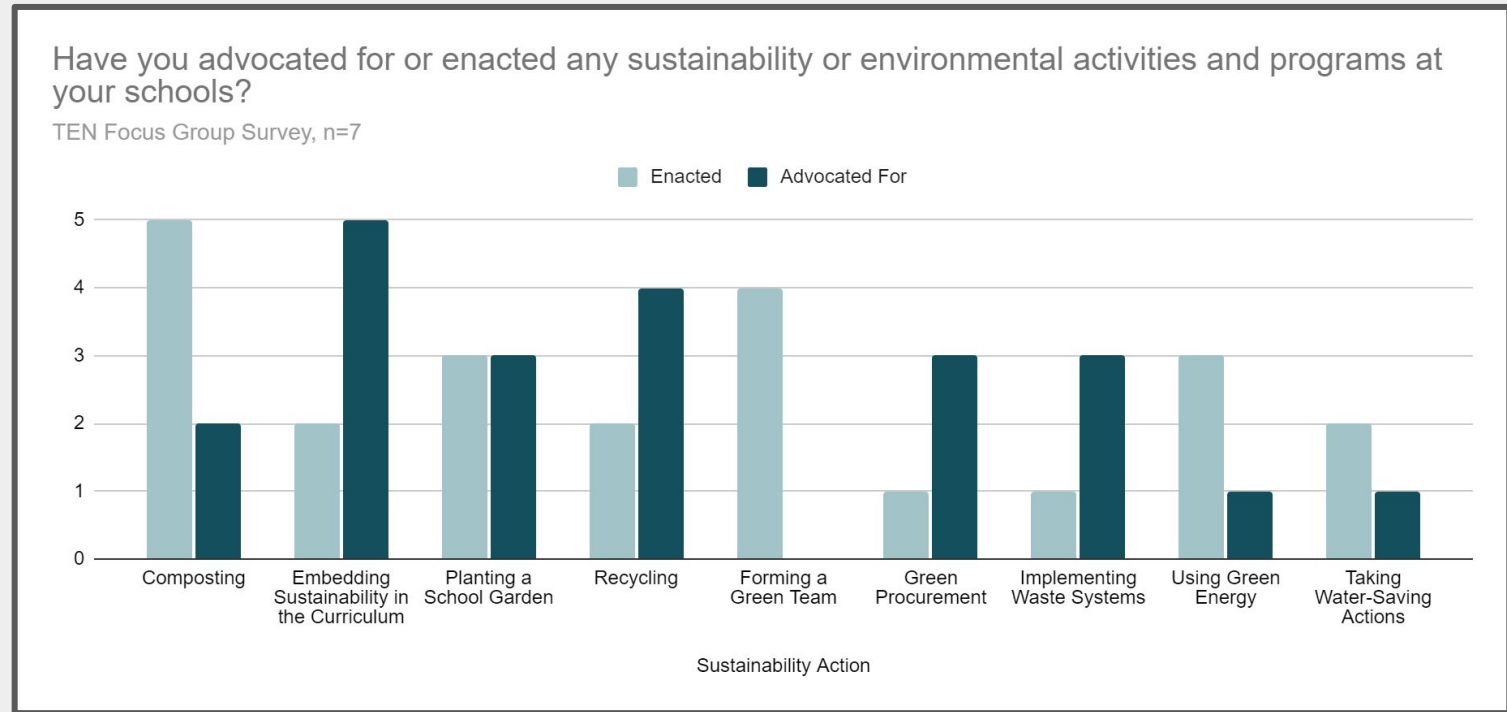
Rubbish Relay

Audit Tools

Climate Book
Resources List

Teachers involved with TEN are advocating for and enacting changes at their schools

Outcome 1: Teachers are implementing activities in schools.



TEN Recommendations

Program Delivery

- Begin the day with more hands-on activities
- Give facilitators microphones to improve accessibility

Expand Sessions

- Extend TEN sessions with more time to complete activities
- Host casual networking events or luncheons

Re-run Focus Groups

- Run focus group once or twice per year to continually assess if objectives, outcomes, and teacher needs are being met

Tomorrow's Leaders for Sustainability

Aim:

To foster student **environmental stewardship** by deepening their **knowledge** and **connection** with the environment and **empowering** them to take action.

1 To foster student **connection** to their local environment and the natural world through meaningful and experiential **learning**.

2 To deliver a **high-quality, tailored program** that is **student-directed** as well as **aligned** with the school's curriculum and learning objectives.

Objectives

3

To foster student **leadership** and **teamwork** skills.

4

To provide a **meaningful opportunity** for students to **take action** in their local community in response to a **real-world issue**.

Outcomes

1

Students feel **increased connection** to the natural world and continue to **engage** and learn about their local environment.

2

Students feel **empowered** as **leaders** in their local schools and/or community and continue to **act to protect** our environment.

3

Schools build increased **knowledge** and **systems** that help reduce resource use and increase biodiversity.

TLfS builds student connection and stewardship of their local environment

Objective 1: Fostering student connection to the environment

“At the end, [a student] went up and said, ‘I want to help what you’re doing in building bird nest boxes in Tasmania and how much of my pocket money do you want?’”

“The program has helped kids kind of take ownership and accountability for what [sustainability actions] they can actually realistically run and promote at school.”

“They want to, you know, sell things from the garden... buy more seeds and things to plant... certainly lots more excitement about composting and waste management and all sorts of things that they’ve been focusing on.”

TLfS effectively delivers content tailored to teachers' needs and expectations

Objective 2: Delivering a tailored program that aligns with the school curriculum



8/14

A donut chart with a teal center and a dark teal outer ring. The teal center is filled with the number 8/14. The dark teal ring is partially filled, representing the fraction 8/14.

of evaluation form respondents and focus group participants enrolled for the connection to curriculum



45%

A donut chart with a teal center and a dark teal outer ring. The teal center is filled with the percentage 45%. The dark teal ring is partially filled, representing the percentage 45%.

of evaluation form respondents said that the quality of program content was TLfS's greatest strength

TLfS inspires students to become stronger leaders and better collaborators

Objective 3: Fostering student leadership and teamwork skills



“Those who go through the program are more confident as an outcome of the program.”

“[TLfS] sets them up for Year Six and doing work in the garden with the well-being and social justice leadership roles that we have.”

TLfS inspires students to take sustainability actions at school

Objective 4: Providing opportunities for students to take action



5/7

of evaluation form respondents indicated plans to start another school sustainability project

“We decided to remove the soy sauce, those little fish bottles that you get.”

“We wanted to take some action, our action is actually sitting out on the table there [pollinator hotels].”

Recommendations for TLfS

Follow-Up Form

- Distribute six months after program completion
- Discuss long-term impacts

Expand Pre-Program Communication

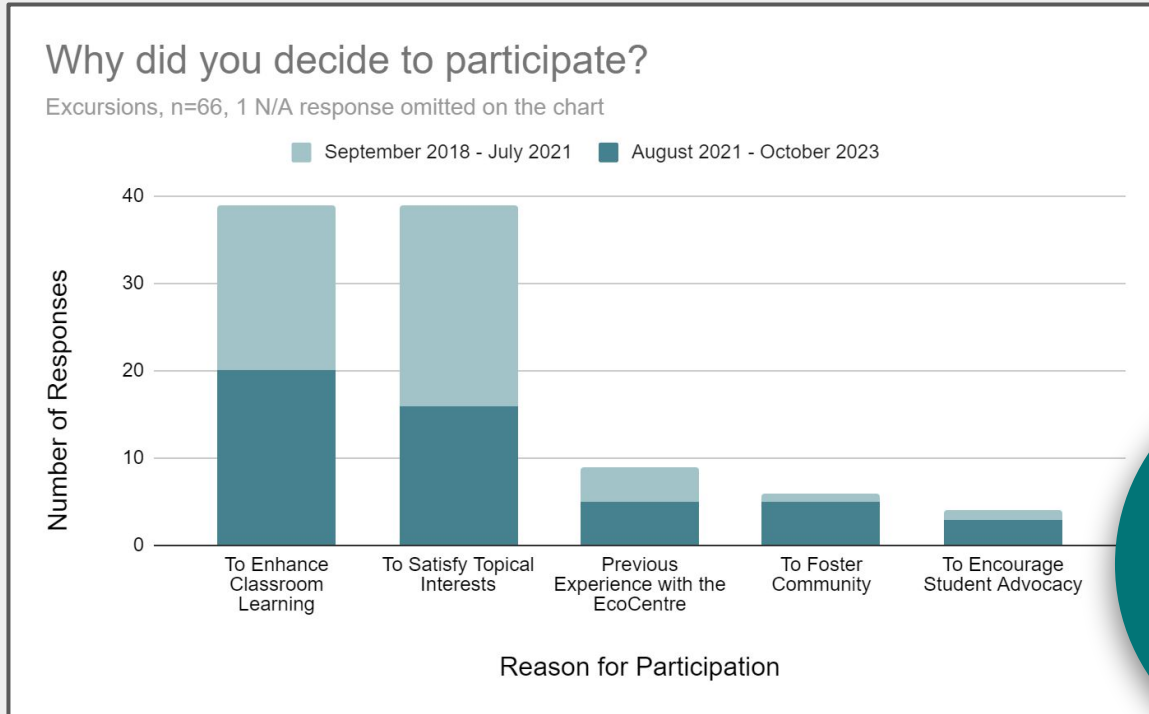
- Involve more school faculty and leadership in the planning phase

Extend Program Length

- Consider a year-long TLfS format
- More time for resources and activities

Excursions

Excursions draw in teachers seeking high-quality learning experiences for their students



59%

Of teachers stated one reason for participation was to enhance classroom learning

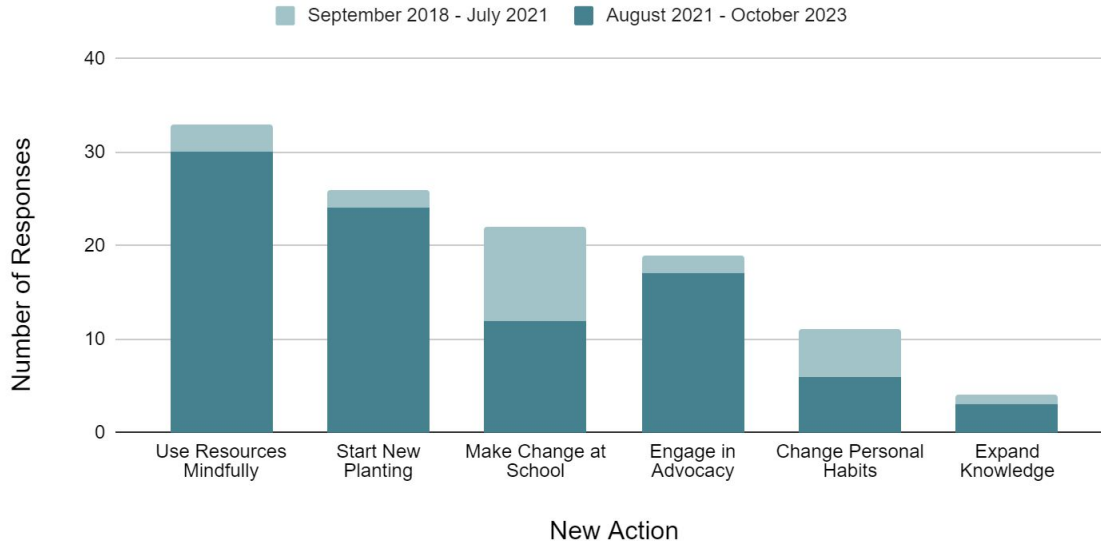
59%

Of teachers stated one reason for participation was to satisfy topical interests

Excursions inspire participants to explore new sustainability actions

Tell us about your planned new sustainability action

Excursions, n=66, 1 N/A, 2 non responses, 4 yes, 1 no, and 6 unsure responses omitted on the chart



86%

planned new
sustainability action
as a result of an
Excursion

Excursions foster a deeper connection with the environment and inspire participants to make changes that protect it

97%

Of form respondents felt a deeper connection to the environment after participating



1 out of every 6 respondents indicated plans to make sustainable changes to their daily habits

Recommendations for Excursions

Add New Activities

- Plant and animal identification and sketching
- Invite guest speakers, particularly Aboriginal voices

Implement New Tools

- Keep sunscreen or bug spray on hand
- More self-directed tools like handheld microscopes or magnifying glasses

Tailor to Younger Students

- Offer a shorter activity time for young students
- Incorporate more tactile elements

Final Recommendations

Revise Evaluation Forms

- Revise questions that are double-barrelled, leading, or unclear
- Add new questions on objectives and outcomes

Spend More Time Outside

- Explore a wider range of the St. Kilda environment to further immerse participants in their learning

Incorporate More Local Content

- Offer more content specific to Port Phillip Bay, like the Yalukit Willam and Indigenous Plants

Teach More Action Taking Skills

- Teachers: Grant Writing, Audits, Policy Development, Forming a Green Team
- Students: Communication, Presentation Skills, Letter-Writing, Workshop Facilitation



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Thank You!

