

Waikato ENVIROSCHOOLS

Raumati 2025 edition

He mihi

Welcome to the Waikato Enviroschools Raumati 2025 newsletter.

As we move into the summer term, we're excited to share everything that's been happening in the Enviroschools community, including inspiring stories from local schools, information about upcoming events, some fantastic new resources, professional learning and development opportunities and more!

We recently welcomed three new Enviroschools Facilitators, Greta Dromgool, Gypsy Taylor-Hewitt and Nic Roderick to our kaupapa! You can find out a bit more about them and put faces to the names in the 'Enviroschools facilitation team' section at the end of this newsletter.

There has been deep learning going on across the rohe, with Enviroschools supporting lots of collaborative school and community restoration projects, including [a māra kai at Ōtorohanga Primary School](#), [a waste transformation at Hauraki Plains College](#) and [community restoration work in Waipā](#).

We'd like to congratulate Tīrau Primary School on their recent holistic reflection. Your students showed incredible manaakitanga (care and hospitality), rangatiratanga (leadership) and enthusiasm – and our facilitators really enjoyed being part of your celebration! If you're not familiar with the process, why not [find out more about holistic reflection](#)?

Speaking of reflection, every year in Term 4 we like to kōrero with each school to review your Enviroschools journey so far, to celebrate successes, identify challenges, and set next steps and goals for the coming year.

Your facilitator will have been in touch this term to arrange a time to carry out your annual planning and reflection. We have a new process to offer called Kato Kōrero, which allows you to pause as a team and explore your Enviroschools journey in depth, collectively identifying next steps for your school. The activity takes approximately one hour and can be completed as part of your annual Enviroschools reflection, celebration and planning. Facilitators can also meet lead teachers individually if this works better. If you haven't done so already, please confirm a time with your facilitator for an individual or group planning meeting.

We hope you enjoy this edition.
Please feel free to forward it on to any interested colleagues.

Ngā mihi,
The Enviroschools team



Tā mātou mahi | What we do

Enviroschools is a nationwide programme supported by the Toimata Foundation, founding partner Te Mauri Tau, and a large network of regional partners like us here at Waikato Regional Council. It helps support early childhood centres and schools on their long-term sustainability journeys, teaching a generation of young people to value and nurture their natural environment.

Our vision is to create a healthy, peaceful, sustainable world through learning and taking action together.

14 regional partners

220 Enviroschools

**50
ECE centres**

**170
schools**

**54,800
tamariki and students**

**15% of early childhood
60% of primary and intermediate**

**56% of secondary
67% of composite and other**

3 collaborators



Waikato Enviroschools acknowledge our funding partners. Their ongoing input and funding is essential to the success of the Enviroschool programme throughout our region.





For students

New Nature Connection resource kit available for schools

From Thursday, 6 November

Outdoor Classroom Day is a global movement to make time outdoors part of every child's day. To celebrate we've created a special Waikato Enviroschools Nature Connection Kit, which will be available for schools to borrow in 2026. We're looking for some schools to trial it with their facilitator in Term 4 and offer feedback. The purpose of the kit is to help children build meaningful, hands-on relationships with the natural world. Instead of just learning about nature, it provides resources, activities and prompts that encourage direct engagement with nature. There are three boxes with easy-to-follow instructions:

- **Active Play** – includes ropes, tarps and pulleys to inspire temporary shelters
- **Creative Movement** – includes a hammock, slackline, climbing rope and whittling kit
- **Observation and Exploration** – includes activities to slow down and notice nature with mindfulness.

A health and safety plan is also supplied with the resource box, and our facilitators will support teachers to lead these activities in safe way. If you are interested booking your school in to use this kit, please contact your facilitator.

Smart Water Schools Programme

The Smart Water Schools programme is now available to schools across Hamilton City and the Waipā and Waikato Districts, and it's FREE! If you're teaching or planning to teach a unit on sustainability or water this year or next, this council-funded programme offers a rich selection of lessons, resources and engaging school visits – all focused on helping students understand and value water. [Find out more and book your free school visit.](#)

Kato Kōrero

We have a special reflection process called Kato Kōrero for your Envirogroups (and/or teaching staff). Kato Kōrero allows you to pause as a team and explore your Enviroschools journey in depth, collectively identifying next steps for your school. It will help you to celebrate your wins, identify next year's challenges and take advantage of opportunities to drive positive change in 2026. The activity takes approximately one hour and can be completed as part of your annual Enviroschools reflection, celebration and planning (or separately). If you're interested, please contact your facilitator to book in a time.

Māra Kai Challenge 2026

Planning for our 2026 Māra Kai Challenge is now well under way! The event is designed to empower and inspire students to grow kai in their school māra, and then create delicious meals to eat, share and enjoy! We're interested to know whether schools would prefer to attend an event at the end of Term 1 or the beginning of Term 2. [Register your interest and indicate your preference.](#)

For staff

Marine Biosecurity Resources (online professional development for teachers)

Thursday, 13 November, 3.30-4.30pm

Waikato Regional Council has developed two new Marine Biosecurity Kits, designed to spark curiosity, deepen understanding and empower students to take action against invasive marine pests. Whether you're teaching in the classroom or heading outside, these curriculum-linked kits are sure to enrich your learning programme.

Find out more about them in and how they can be used – in the classroom or as part of a visit to the coast – in this online professional development session for teachers. [Register here.](#)

Enviroschools 101 (online)

12 and 19 February 2026, 3.30 – 5pm

Enviroschools 101 is an interactive course we run annually. It's designed for schools new to Enviroschools, new lead teachers and other staff wanting to engage more in the Enviroschools programme. The course is comprised of two 1.5-hour sessions which cover the Enviroschools kaupapa and practical support for getting started. If there are teachers in your school who are looking to get more involved in 2026, please encourage them to register, too!

[Register here.](#)

Teacher Re-energise: Nature Connection (Pokuru School)

Wednesday, 18 March, 9am – 3pm

Join us for an inspiring and immersive day of professional development that will help you explore and deepen your connection with nature to better support all learners.

We will be:

- spending as much of the day as possible outside – slowing down, observing, connecting, sharing, being inspired and being curious
- exploring various contexts for learning and connecting with the curriculum
- learning about the Pokuru School outdoor classroom and play-based learning programme.

[Register here.](#)

Using CRT to bring environmental education to life (professional learning and development recording)

Last term, Facilitator Anna Cunningham, in collaboration with a number of local schools, ran an online session where we heard from passionate educators across the Waikato region who are making the most of Classroom Release Time (CRT) to bring environmental education to life in their schools.

Listen to real stories, practical strategies and innovative approaches that you can try out at your own school.

[Access the recording.](#) (password ZMi.JBj8)



Students connect with nature for Conservation Week



To celebrate Conservation Week, the Waikato Enviroschools team organised a series of events in Te Waotu (South Waikato), Cambridge (Waipā) and Kauaeranga Valley (Thames-Coromandel). The celebrations were designed to bring together students and multiple community experts to be inspired by conservation and taking care of nature. The students displayed lots of enthusiasm for the hands-on learning, from making harakeke (flax) rope to planting trees. At the end of the day, they reflected on their highlights and the actions they want to take back to school. The events left students inspired to take action for their local environment, and strengthened connections between schools, their local communities and nature.



Pūriri School tracking local wildlife

Pūriri School is lucky to have a beautiful awa right across the road. Students visit it regularly. These visits provide opportunities for free play, connecting with nature, planned activities, and learning about the natural environment and the living creatures we share it with.

A group of students have been investigating ways to protect our local awa and improve the biodiversity of the surrounding environment. Part of this investigation has been to collect data on who exactly they are sharing this environment with.

And, what better way to find out, than building tracking tunnels? During enviro-time at school, students researched how to make the tunnels, deciding that milk bottles with ink pads and sponges would work best for them and the local habitat.



Kauri protection with Te Miro School

Te Miro students recently had a visit from the Waikato Regional Council kauri protection trailer and took part in a workshop session that started with a presentation from their environmental education team. Following the presentation, they moved outside to some contextual numeracy looking at tree circumference, a boot-cleaning activity, special species cards, a kauri model from Wētā Workshop and a super exciting VR experience. During the action-packed day, they learned about why kauri are so special, the threat they face, and what they and their community can do to protect our giants of the forest. Students were challenged to spread the word further – to go home and share what we can all do to protect kauri trees from kauri dieback with their friends and whānau. The top tips they learnt were to: stay away from the root zone, clean shoes before AND after entering kauri forest, and always stick to the paths.



Pirongia School add to the community options for reducing waste



With the support of Waipā District Council, Pirongia School recently installed a CarbonCycle compost system. This will be supported with year-long wrap-around support in the form of a dedicated compost manager thanks to Para Kore funding.

With the māra kai at Pirongia School thriving, this compost system is a welcome addition to the garden space and their other sustainability initiatives. The school will begin using the system themselves, and may also open it up to the community next year. The community is also well supported with compost systems at a local early childhood education centre and the Mountain Folk Cafe. When the compost is ready, the plan is to use it to enrich the soil in the school's māra kai.

Spring planting at Maramarua School

Preparations for a spring garden are keeping keen gardeners busy at Maramarua School this term. Over the winter months, planning a Calf and Lamb Day plant stall was quietly ticking along, with many seeds carefully sorted, packaged and labelled ready for the big sale.

But they didn't stop at seeds and also had plants to grow for the event. Every Tuesday lunchtime interested students gave up their playtime to get their hands dirty. The work was led by the school's enviroleaders Lavina, Rose, Elise, and Jade with help from enthusiastic teacher Shana Russell, parent input from garden lover Kristen and support from Enviroschools facilitator Rachael Cheeseman.

Together, they sowed a wide variety of seeds – from seasonal staples like tomatoes and cucumbers, through to watermelon, fennel and luffa. A local family kindly donated a large pile of potting mix to help the students to bring their seeds to life.

Calf and Lamb Day was a big success and one grandmother bought 25 pumpkin plants! Some of the leftover seedlings that didn't sell are being planted in the school gardens. And the leftover seed packets were donated to the Tūākau Seed Library (at the Tūākau Library), used for koha, planted or sent to the school seed library



Year 13 Students at St Peter's explore stream health

Students from St Peter's took part in a lakes field trip as part of their Year 13 Environmental Systems and Societies (ESS) class. They visited two peat lakes in the Waipā District – Lake Ngā Roto and Lake Rotopiko – to explore water pollution, with a particular focus on agricultural impacts. Waikato Regional Council Lakes Scientist and water quality expert Mat Allan also supported the trip with specialist knowledge and equipment to help the students understand the issues these ecosystems face.

Growing their understanding through hands-on learning, the students used a Secchi disk and clarity tube to assess the trophic states of the shallow lakes. The Secchi disk measures the clarity or turbidity of a body of water by lowering it until it disappears and then raising it until it reappears. The depth at which it disappears, known as the Secchi depth, is an indicator of water clarity. The clarity tube has essentially the same function. It's filled with water so observations can be made of the distance at which a black disk inside the tube can be seen before it disappears.

The information gathered on the field trip will be used as a real life example in the student's programme assessment. They gained a deeper understanding of human impacts on our environment, learning all about how the lakes became polluted and hypertrophic, and what mitigation efforts are underway to restore lake health. Monitoring, restoration and regulations were all touched on, and the students also developed a deeper awareness of the role of Waikato Regional Council in balancing the way we use land and water.



He rauemi | Resource spotlight

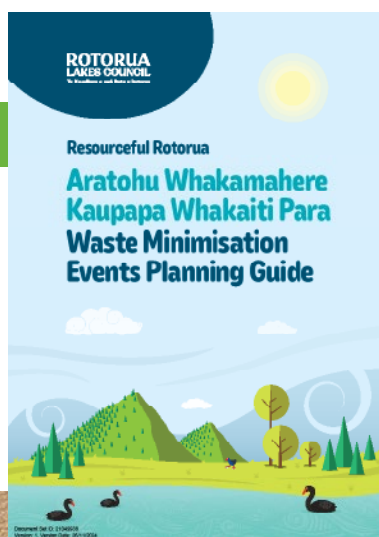
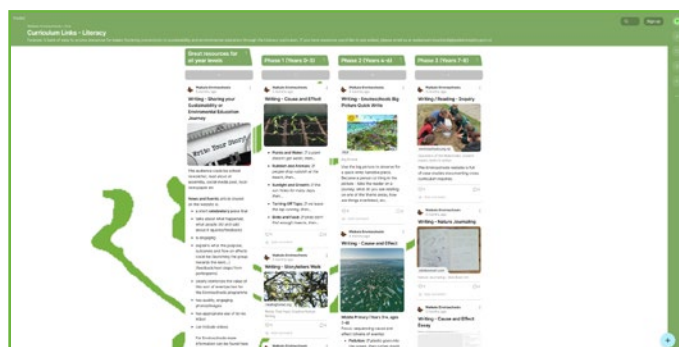
New Padlets: linking literacy and maths with environmental education

In response to teacher requests for strong and explicit curriculum connections, we've developed two new Padlets with activities, resources and examples of how environmental education can be woven into literacy and maths education.

Both Padlets are organised by phase and year level, making it easy to find relevant ideas for your class. They've been developed with input and support from local teachers. We hope they'll be a useful resource and we welcome suggestions for any other links, tools and resources you'd like to see added to them!

[Curriculum Links Padlet – Literacy](#)

[Curriculum Links Padlet – Mathematics and Statistics](#)



He tīwhiri | Quick sustainability tips

With end-of-year events and Christmas celebrations coming up, it's a great time to think about how we can reduce waste at our school gatherings. Our Enviroschools partners at Rotorua Lakes Council have developed a handy [Waste Minimisation Events Planning Guide](#), packed with tips on planning low-waste events.

It's an easy-to-follow resource to help your school events reflect your Enviroschools goals, meet your waste minimisation targets, and help tamariki see that celebrations can be both fun and environmentally conscious.

Ngā ringa hāpai | Enviroschools Waikato facilitation team

Nau mai, haere mai ki waenganui a tātou to our new Enviroschools facilitators Greta Dromgool, Gypsy Taylor-Hewitt and Nic Roderick!

Contact details

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Greta lives in Te Aroha and is originally from the South Island. She studied ecology, conservation, and teaching, and has worked in science education in the Waikato region for the past 18 years. Greta is excited to be part of the Enviroschools team and looks forward to supporting and connecting teachers in the Matamata-Piako District.

Gypsy is thrilled to join the Enviroschools team and support schools in Waipā and Hamilton. She is looking forward to seeing all the amazing things already happening and to planning for next year soon!

Nic is based in Taupō and is originally from Te Puke. She has a passion for connecting people with nature, knowledge, and one another. Nic aims to enhance children's curiosity about the natural world, inspire them through positive environmental solutions, and encourage lifelong values of kaitiakitanga. Ultimately, she hopes to build resilience in people, communities, and natural ecosystems for the future.



Back row, left to right: Greta, Jo, Rachael
Middle row, left to right: Nic, Anna, Cami, Adrienne
Front row, left to right: Gypsy, Alex, Michelle

Find out more

enviroschools.org.nz

Check out the great selection of national news, resources and ideas in the team area. To register, head to 'team area login' and click 'register'. Please note that you will need your school/centre's MoE number to complete the registration process. You can find this at educationcounts.govt.nz.

Waikato Enviroschools Facebook

facebook.com/groups/waikatoenviroschools

Join our friendly and supportive closed forum to share inspiration, thoughts, learnings and more.



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