Waikato ENVIROSCHOOLS

Hōtoke 2025 edition

HAURAKI

He mihi

Welcome to the Waikato Enviroschools newsletter. We hope your Term 2 is going well. This pānui is full of opportunities for teachers and students, along with inspiring stories from around our network that we're excited to share with you.

We'd like to extend a warm welcome to St Anthony's Catholic School! Nau mai, haere mai ki te whānau o Enviroschools!

Last term we had an amazing collection of events for students and PLD for teachers. We hosted three World Water Day celebrations in Tuakau, Whāingaroa, and Tūrangi, where students engaged in hands-on experiences to deepen their understanding of why water is such a precious resource. Through a range of interactive activities, they explored its vital role in ecosystems, its importance to people and nature, and how we can protect freshwater and marine environments for future generations.

We also held two Zero Waste events in Tokoroa and Te Kūiti, where students learned about the waste journey, the impacts of landfill and circular solutions for a more sustainable future. The events sparked some powerful thinking and creativity, with students coming up with actions their schools could take to reduce waste and rethink their impact.

Tā mātou mahi | What we do

Naikato

Distric

Council

FOUNDATION

aikato

For teachers, our Enviroschools 101 online course returned this year – ideal for schools new to the programme or anyone wanting a refresher. If you missed it, check out the recordings.

In Term 2, we hosted our annual regional Climate Summit and Leadership Skills day with record numbers of secondary school students attending at Ōtāwhao Marae, Te Awamutu College. The interschool Māra Kai Challenge also returned this year to Hukanui Primary School and NZMA in Hamilton.

We hope this newsletter offers an engaging read. Please feel free to forward it on to any interested colleagues.

Ngā mihi, The Enviroschools team

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.

City Council

14 regional partners **219** Enviroschools 54,500 50 169 schools tamariki and students **ECE** centres 14% of early childhood 53% of secondary 67% of primary and intermediate 67% of composite and other collaborators Waikato Enviroschools acknowledge our funding partners. Their ongoing input and funding is essential to the success of the Enviroschool programme throughout our region. ÖTOROHA DISTRICT COL TOIMATA Hamilton

ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL

Central Kids

Waitómo

Ngā kaupapa e haere ake nei | Opportunities

For students

Designing for Zero Waste at your School

25 June, 9.30am- 2.00pm, Whenuakite School, Coromandel

Learn how to progress your journey towards achieving zero waste with this exciting interschool event. It offers a hands-on learning experience for students and teachers. And it's a great opportunity to connect with local experts, exchange ideas and share experiences. The event is designed for students and teachers. Schools can bring up to six students with one adult and there is **teacher release funding** available to attend. Register here.

Conservation week

1-7 September

Join us for a fun and inspiring day to celebrate Conservation Week 2025! These interschool events are designed to bring together groups of students from schools and multiple community experts to learn and be inspired with the theme of Taking Action for Nature.

Wednesday, 10 September, Victoria Square, Cambridge. Register your interest here. Thursday, 4 September, DOC Kauaeranga Visitor Centre, Thames. Register your interest here. Watch this space for details of an event in South Waikato too! Check out what we got up to last year if you're after some extra inspiration.



For teachers

Teacher Re-Energise

18 June, 10am-2pm, Cambridge Primary School

Join us for an inspiring session designed to reenergise your Enviroschools journey. As we mark the mid-point of the year and reflect on Matariki,

this is a chance to set fresh goals, reconnect with the kaupapa and explore resources like the Kauri Experience and our Enviroschools kits. You'll also have the chance to connect with other educators, share stories, and find renewed energy for the mahi ahead. Register here.

Other opportunities from NZAEE

Nature Connection in Primary and Intermediate Schools

10 June, 3.30 - 4.45pm, online

Guest speakers: Enviroschools facilitators Adrienne Grant and Sara Taylor. This webinar will showcase how nature connection can be incorporated within learning for ākonga in Years 0 - 8, with examples from Waikato Enviroschools.

We'll share stories of schools at all stages of their journey, including practical tips and how they have overcome challenges along the way. Connection with te taiao looks different for each community and age group, including local pūrākau and landscapes, outdoor classrooms, bush schools, or using natural materials to strengthen numeracy and creativity. Register here.

BLAKE Inspire for Teachers

30 June – 4 July, 22 – 26 September or 29 September – 3 October, Auckland

BLAKE Inspire for Teachers is a five-day, action-packed environmental education and leadership development programme in Auckland for primary and intermediate teachers.

Funded by the Ministry of Education (excluding travel to and from Auckland) the programme brings together teachers from all over Aotearoa who are keen to develop a deeper understanding of environmental issues and how to apply environmental education across all subjects. Apply here.

Māori knowledge in science education: He mana ōrite, he awa whiria

12 June, 4 - 4.45 pm

Join Professor Georgina Tuari Stewart from Te Kura Mātauranga School of Education, AUT, and Associate Professor Sally Birdsall from the Faculty of Arts & Education at the University of Auckland for this free educational webinar.

Sally and Georgina are ex-school science teachers – one primary, one secondary. They're interested in the question of including Māori knowledge in the science classroom programme of teaching and learning. Register here.

He tīwhiri | Quick sustainability tips

Mulching is a simple way to care for your school garden over the colder months. Adding a good layer of mulch helps protect plant roots from frost, acting as an insulation layer to keep the soil warmer. Mulch also locks in moisture, reducing the need for watering. You don't have to purchase expensive mulch. Just use what you have on hand! Great mulch materials include:

- autumn leaves
- untreated straw or hay
- shredded newspaper or cardboard
- wood chips or bark
- grass clippings (in thin layers to avoid matting).

Ngā hua | Our stories

Rural schools connect with local streams

The Enviroschools 'water of life' theme area, encourages children to engage with their local awa and to take collective action towards a sustainable future. Catchment Community Group Facilitator, Robyn Williamson, who regularly monitors water quality, recently approached Waikato Regional Council to help support a local investigation at Oteke Stream.

This presented the perfect opportunity to get local schools involved. Remote coastal schools Piripiri Caves and Kinohaku were eager to join in and the study quickly snowballed into a rich environmental learning experience for tamariki, whānau, and the wider community.

The local stream, which flows just a short walk from Kinohaku School, was the perfect place for students to begin exploring the health of their local waterways. They worked in mixed-age groups to measure water clarity, velocity, temperature and pH. To their surprise, the results revealed that despite flowing under a road and beside a busy transfer station, Oteke Stream was clearer and cleaner than many expected.

High water clarity and balanced pH suggested a healthy ecosystem, which was confirmed when students discovered a range of macroinvertebrates and small fish. "Wahoo check this out!", "There are things living in here." said excited students as they marvelled at the rich variety of the thriving local ecosystem.

The hands-on experience not only connected students with their local waterway but also reinforced their understanding that water is a precious, living resource. They learned about how human activity can impact water health and quickly grasped the idea that we all have a role to play in protecting and enhancing our freshwater ecosystems. The students began thinking like environmental stewards, suggesting riparian planting, cleaning up litter near the stream and even committing to monitoring changes over the seasons.

Through this small but powerful local action, students, educators, whānau and community members came together to explore, learn and plan for a future where water is treasured and protected. Kinohaku School is now getting involved in a Waikato Regional Council planting day to help restore the wider catchment. A generous, thick mulch layer of around 5-10 cm deep will have the best effects. Just be sure to keep it a little away from the base of plants to avoid rot. Happy mulching!







Matangi Primary tunnel their way towards predator free goal



Matangi Primary really dug their kaitiakitanga day for Term 1. It was all about making tracking tunnels so the school can be part of the Predator Free New Zealand movement.

The day started with an assembly, led by Enviroleaders, which ensured all classes understood what tracking tunnels were, why they are important and how to make them.

The tunnels are designed for tracking small mammals such as mice, rats and stoats. And they can be used before and after predator control to measure its effectiveness.

The Enviroleaders did a great job of being organised and motivating the classes. Each class made their own tracking tunnels, using milk bottles and coreflute designs, coved them with camouflage and identified a suitable place for them.

Motivation was also kept high by the cool incentive of ice blocks for the class that completed the most jobs and the rangatahi were very competitive trying to complete as many as possible!

As well as making the tracking tunnels, the Enviroleaders planted seedlings in the vegetable gardens. And all students planted vegetable seeds in a pot to go in the school growing tunnel, weeded the ngāhere and pump track area, and harvested the apples off the apple tree. The school was fortunate to have parent help from Erica and Kelly, who pruned the fruit trees to make them healthier and free of dead wood.

The whole school came together at the end of the day with a slide show of photos of each class making their tunnels and completing jobs – a great way reflect on and celebrate what had been achieved.

The following week, everyone was excited to check the tracking tunnels and a number of mouse prints were spotted.

With the support of their facilitator, the school is going to be setting up a trap line to trap pests like rats, hedgehogs and mice.

Kaitiakitanga days happen at the end of each term as a way for the whole school to come together and look after the school grounds.

Zero waste field trip drives local solutions

Schools in South Waikato recently explored the concept of waste and what it truly means to be "zero waste." Students from Tokoroa Intermediate, Bishop Edward Gaines, and Te Waotu, got together in Tokoroa for an eye-opening experience at the local waste transfer station. Too often, we consume items without thinking about their origins, the energy required to produce them, or where they end up when discarded. Students reflected on these issues, and on the importance of respecting the land, taking care of what we have, and using things until they are truly unusable.

"Recycling isn't enough – we should reuse items more. Plastic can last in the environment for a very long time," said one student.

Understanding deepened when Site Manager Tracey Beer shared the hard truths about recycling. They learned that even a single incorrect item in a recycling bin can ruin an entire load, making the process costly and inefficient. And, on average, 11 trucks transport around 638 tonnes of landfill waste from Tokoroa to Hampton Downs each week.

The visit continued at Tokoroa Intermediate, where a warm mihi whakatau set the tone for an inspiring afternoon. Digital Technologies and Garden to Table Lead Teacher Kersty Stephenson guided students through the school's extensive māra kai (food garden) and composting area.

"If we can reuse it, it's a resource," she explained, highlighting their ongoing efforts to refine waste systems. With strong communication, good systems and community support, the school has built a thriving sustainability initiative. Many of their garden beds have been donated, and their next goal is to create a "bee corridor" in the backfield to attract pollinators.

Inspired by everything they had seen and learned, students spent the afternoon reflecting and planning their own zero-waste projects. Bishop Edward Gaines students decided to build a bigger worm farm and a māra kai to tackle food waste. Te Waotu students plan to host a market day selling recycled-material products and art, create an insect farm, and organise a whole-school recycling competition.

And Tokoroa Intermediate students were eager to develop new skills and repair items through a Repair Café initiative. The experience sparked a wave of enthusiasm for zero-waste practices, proving that with knowledge and action, students can make a real difference in their communities.



Te Totara School hits major composting milestone



Te Totara School is celebrating a major achievement in its sustainability efforts. They've diverted over 2,000 litres of food scraps from landfill since August 2024 as part of their hot composting system. The milestone includes waste collected from student lunchboxes and the staffroom, all of which was repurposed into compost to enrich the school's gardens.

The composting system was made possible through generous support from Hamilton City Council's Waste Minimisation Fund and Waikato Regional Council's Enviroschools programme. This funding enabled the school to install a secure, pest-free composting system, ensuring food scraps are safely and effectively processed on site.

The hot composting system, which processes waste at high temperatures, allows for the rapid and hygienic breakdown of organic material. The resulting compost is used in the school's gardens, completing a sustainable cycle and teaching students the value of resource conservation. "This initiative represents the power of community partnerships and hands-on environmental education," said a Te Totara School spokesperson. "Our students are seeing firsthand how everyday actions – like putting food scraps in the right bin – can have a meaningful impact on our planet." Find out more about Te Totara School's journey on the Enviroschools website.



He rauemi | Resource spotlight

Integrating with the curriculum

We know reading, writing and maths are a priority, so we're working to make sure all our resources clearly show how they link to learning across key areas of the curriculum. Whether it's measuring rainfall for maths, writing persuasive letters about conservation issues, or exploring local pūrākau in literacy, the opportunities are endless. On the Enviroschools website, you'll find a range of examples and resources that show how environmental learning can be woven into reading, writing, maths, science, and more. Here are some examples of what we've been doing recently:

Maeroa Intermediate Takes Maths Outdoors for a Real-World Challenge

Science with Stream Studies

Measuring the Mighty - Maths Adventures in Kauri Education

We can also provide a range of nature connection or stream study activities at school camps. If you'd like support tailoring your environmental education journey, contact your Enviroschools facilitator.

Ngā ringa hāpai | Enviroschools Waikato facilitation team

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Left top: Benoir Back row, left to right: Sara, Alex, Cami Middle row, left to right: Michelle, Anna, Jenni Front row, left to right: Rachael, Jo, Adrienne

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.

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

KAUNIHERA A-ROHE O

ÖTOROHANGA DISTRICT COUNCIL







South

Waikato

District



Hamilton

City Council







Waitomo



HAURAKI