

Waikato ENVIROSCHOOLS

Raumati edition

He mihi

Welcome to the Waikato Enviroschools newsletter.

We're so excited to share everything that's been happening in the Enviroschools community, including fantastic new resources and opportunities, and inspiring stories from local schools!

We recently welcomed our newest Enviroschool. Nau mai, haere mai ki waenganui i a tātou Tapu School. And, hats off to the Ōtorohanga Primary School students who recently presented their Enviroschools journey to district councillors. Their kōrero was so well received that Mayor Baxter invited them back! We deeply value our partnerships with district councils and recognise the opportunities they provide for students to connect with decision-makers in their rohe.

Term 3 was jam-packed with learning. During Conservation Week, we had dozens of schools participate in our activities and student events across the region. This year, the theme was "taking action for nature". In collaboration with various community partners, students participated in a wide range of engaging activities, including tree planting, connecting with nature through mindfulness, learning about pests and investigating stream invertebrates.

The events were filled with excitement, with students actively involved and eager to continue exploring nature in their own schools.

We also held our first **Kūmara Wānanga**, learning about the cultural and historical significance of kūmara, exploring its journey to Aotearoa, its cultivation in Kirikiriroa and its role in Māori traditions. Teachers learned about the tikanga of kūmara planting and harvesting and gained practical knowledge for their school māra kai (food gardens). There are more sessions to come, so let your facilitator know if you're interested in learning more.

This term, we bid farewell to Jennifer Scothern-King, our facilitator for Taupō and South Waikato. Jenni will be retiring at the end of 2024. We wish her well and look forward to welcoming a new facilitator to our team in 2025.

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

Ngā mihi,
The Enviroschools team

P.S. If you can't wait for the next newsletter, why not join our [Facebook group](#) for more tips, ideas and inspiration!

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

219 Enviroschools

**51
ECE centres**

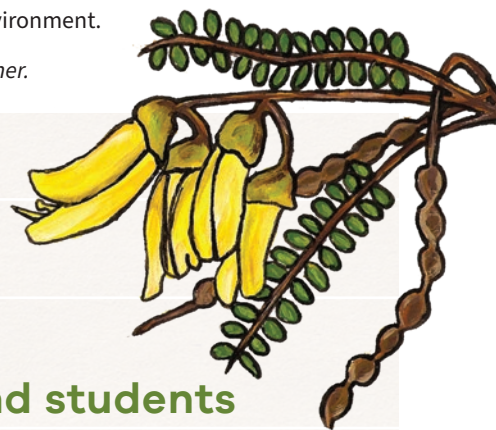
**168
schools**

**53,100
tamariki and students**

**14% of early childhood
59% of primary and intermediate**

**51% 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.



Ngā kaupapa e haere ake nei | Opportunities

For students

World Water Day

17-28 March (event dates TBC)

We're excited to announce that we're planning a series of inter-school student events to celebrate World Water Day! This will be a wonderful opportunity for students to learn about our freshwater and marine ecosystems and how we can all care for our precious wai. Watch this space for more details!

Kauri Protection Education Experience

By reservation

Your facilitator can arrange for the Kauri Protection Education Experience to visit your school! The facilitated experience features a virtual reality adventure, our kauri model and fun activity stations.

For teachers

Enviroschools 101

13, 20 and 27 February 3.30pm-5.00pm

These interactive workshops aimed at new lead teachers and support teachers introduce the concept of sustainability, the Enviroschools kaupapa, links to the curriculum and much, much more. The full course spans three 1.5-hour after-school sessions over a three-week period. It's been very popular in recent years, so don't delay. Register [here](#).

Climate Change Education Support

Climate change can be a tricky topic to teach. Storms, flooding and sea level rise can feel all too close to home for young people, who may be fearful about what their future holds.

Join our 2025 Climate Cohort, a new professional network for teachers, and together we can help rangatahi navigate this constantly challenging and often overwhelming kaupapa.

Membership is completely FREE, courtesy of the education team at Waikato Regional Council.

Member benefits

- Receive support from an environmental education facilitator.
- Access facilitated professional development.
- Make connections with climate change experts.
- Network with like-minded teachers.

We're seeking expressions of interest from educators teaching students from Year 6 to Year 10 who would like support delivering the resource Climate Change: prepare today, live well tomorrow, hosted on the NZAEE website. Register [here](#).



Freshwater Biosecurity Guardians

Term 1 and 2

Freshwater Biosecurity Guardians is a fun, interactive learning programme, available to [download](#) from the Waikato Regional Council website. During terms 1 and 2, we have an additional opportunity for one of our freshwater biosecurity educators to come and run facilitated sessions with your class. If this would be of interest to your students, contact your facilitator.



NZAEE Conference

NZAEE (New Zealand Association for Environmental Education) recently held their biannual national conference. It focused on 'Manawa Taiao, Manawa Ora – Sharing Hope and Action'. NZAEE conferences offer insights from diverse voices in the environmental education space. If you're a teacher or current NZAEE member and would like to access the conference recordings, please email Becky: becky@nzae.org.nz.

Holistic reflections are changing

From 2025, we'll be moving away from the staged-based approach and the Bronze, Silver, and Green-Gold reflection labels.

Your facilitators will be there to help you co-construct your own reflection process – one that's locally responsive, celebratory and unifying.

Te Rerenga and Pirongia Schools have already reflected using the new Holistic Reflection framework. It's been encouraging to see the joy and celebration as we move from the stage-based process to one that is co-constructed according to the unique needs and wishes of each school. Check out this [poem](#) shared at Pirongia School's reflection celebration.

Congratulations also to Rototuna Primary for their Silver Reflection and Hamilton East, who reflected at Green-Gold, whilst exploring the new celebratory approach.

Each school is at a different stage, so please speak to your facilitator during your annual planning hui to explore what reflection and celebration could look like for your school.



He tīwhiri | Quick sustainability tips

Gifts that don't cost the Earth

Christmas is fast approaching. Many of us use this time to connect with our loved ones and give gifts. It can be hard balancing expectations, cost and time, even before we consider how purchases might impact our environment.

The society we live in has normalised wasteful consumption to the extent we barely notice it. Advertisers compete to convince us we and our loved ones can only be happy if we have the latest gadget, gizmo or gimmick.

They're often made of plastic and often designed to quickly become obsolete to keep us coming back for more. And it's not by accident that we're made to feel like a Scrooge for not buying in.

But there are lots of ways to show your loved ones you care about them that also show them you care about the planet. For Christmas celebrations that don't cost the Earth, check out [this article](#).

Ngā hua | Our stories

Travelling tōtara planted to honour Tuuheitia



While tōtara put down strong roots, they've also been known to travel. Māori used tōtara when building and carving, particularly for crafting waka. And, thanks to the kids at Kio Kio School, the trees have recently been taking up residence in many a new home.

Kio Kio students had grown tōtara seedlings in their shade house, but the trees had outgrown the space. So they sought out connections to share the saplings with other schools.

Science! With Kūmara growing!

Getting Kūmara to grow well is a fine art, backed up by a lot of interesting science and some [fascinating history](#). So it's a vegetable that adds at least as much richness to the curriculum as it adds to our plates.

At St Joseph's School in Paeroa, new entrant students are incorporating kūmara growing into their curriculum. After learning about the history and importance of kūmara through the EnviroSchools Te Kūmara book, students explored how to grow kūmara slips from a "mother plant".

They conducted an experiment by placing kūmara in both water and soil to observe which environment would produce slips first, linking their learning about plant growth to hypothesis-making, recording and observation skills.

Their next steps will be to monitor the growth of their kūmara slips, plant them in their vegetable garden and see which environmental conditions are optimal for growing.

Best of all, they'll get to take the kūmara home at the end, feeding the body as well as the mind. For more resources on growing kūmara, visit the EnviroSchools website.

With the help of EnviroSchools facilitators and the community, the trees were collected and delivered to Tokoroa North School, Tainui Full Primary, Strathmore Primary, David Henry School and Bishop Edward Gaines Catholic School.

Leading up to a Conservation Week event on 6 September, seven trees were set aside for the schools to plant in Lake Moananui Reserve, with support from Maree, South Waikato District Council's Parks and Reserves Manager.

The students were excited to plant and name their trees, committing to care for them as part of their kaitiakitanga. The event held additional significance as it coincided with the day Kiingi Tuuheitia was laid to rest.

The new tōtara grove and small but significant planting ceremony honoured his memory with the sentiment: kua hinga te tōtara o te waonui a Tāne, a great tōtara has fallen. But, thanks to the work of Kio Kio School, many tōtara will now stand tall as lasting reminders of a proud legacy.



New freshwater resource gets the creativity flowing

We recently launched a new learning resource, [Freshwater Guardians](#). It's designed to help students protect freshwater environments through engaging, hands-on activities. In September, at the Kirikiriroa Hamilton Conservation Week inter-school event, students got the chance to try it out.



Participating in a range of interactive learning stations, they played a team game to identify freshwater species (native and invasive). They also learnt how to protect our waterways, including the importance of checking, cleaning and drying boats, reporting pest sightings and doing their bit to raise awareness.

Students then planned and performed creative and extremely entertaining skits to demonstrate these messages. They had the audience in stitches, earning well-deserved rounds of applause.

You can download the Freshwater Guardians resource for FREE, [here](#) and speak to your facilitator if you would like support delivering the programme.

Art, mindfulness and nature connection at Hillcrest Normal School

At Hillcrest Normal School, Room 15, with support from Facilitator Adrienne used the Mantle of the Expert (MOTE) approach in their arts inquiry to combine art, mindfulness and nature connection.

As part of this creative journey, students became artists at the fictional "Te Ika a Māui School of Arts". Their task was to interpret the whakataukī 'āta mātai, mātai whetū' – grounded in the land, looking to the stars.

During this inquiry, students took part in a barefoot walking meditation on the school field to inspire deep connection with the earth.

They then gathered leaves, petals and twigs to create collaborative nature mandalas, while exploring the idea that art can be an experience, a process, and temporary.

Over the following weeks, they explored environmental contrasts, creating mandalas out of litter in juxtaposition to their natural ones. This sparked powerful conversations about the future of the land and how we care for it.

At the end of the inquiry, the students curated an exhibition and proudly presented their work to their whānau, showcasing not only their artistic talent but their newfound mindfulness and kaitiakitanga. The full story is available [here](#).



He rauemi | Resource spotlight

We're excited to share that the Waikato Regional Council education webpage has been revamped and much improved!

It's packed with free resources and tools to enhance environmental learning in the classroom, and you can use it to book resources like waste audits and stream study kits, the Kauri Protection experience, and facilitated programmes on freshwater and marine biosecurity.

The page also offers downloadable resources, instructional videos and ready-to-go programmes for your classroom. We'll continue to add useful stuff, so it's definitely a site to add to your bookmarks. You can find it [here](#).

A screenshot of the Waikato Regional Council education webpage. The header is teal with the Waikato Regional Council logo on the left and navigation links: KAUNIHERA COUNCIL, HAPORI COMMUNITY, RATONGA SERVICES, TAIAO ENVIRONMENT, and Ā MĀTOU MAHI WHAT WE'RE DOING. On the right, there are links for Whakapā mai Contact us and Ara mahi Careers. The main content area features a large image of a child wearing glasses and holding a stick, with a teal overlay containing the text "Resources for teachers". Below the image, there is a breadcrumb trail: Services > Education > Resources for teachers, and a welcome message: "Welcome to our education resource hub." A vertical "Feedback" button is visible on the right side of the page.

Ngā ringa hāpai | Enviroschools Waikato facilitation team

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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 here 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.

