“Converting the bubble wrap generation into eco warriors”: results on the effectiveness of a co-signed protocol.

Eco-warrior?

http://rema2007.wordpress.com/category/arte-cultura/costume-societa/design/page/2/
“I, as a young person in this world have every right to address anyone on these issues, as they so concern my future. I, as a young person have the right to be heard by the people in power over the kind of conditions they are creating for my future” (Sherrey-Dadd, 2009)

The role of schools?
Create action competent students
  Capable of taking action on behalf of the environment
Create Critical individuals
  Able to improve their communities


How?

- ‘Hands on’ activities
- Knowledgeable teachers (Well trained and in serviced)
- Tapping into ‘values’
- Outdoor learning/experiences
- Developing skills
- Whole school shared vision/systems
- Knowledge development
- Holistic approach
- Learner centred
- Working together: students, teachers and community
But wait…

Opportunities?
When did you make a difference in your school when you were a student yourself?

INTERGENERATIONAL INFLUENCE

- Classroom ➔ Accident?
- Parents/community ➔ Planned?
‘The general who knows his enemy will not be defeated in a thousand battles’

Challenges facing environmental educators

Who is the enemy?
THE BUBBLE WRAP GENERATION


- 92% of Australians live in urban environments
- Most of the children will grow up in McMansion-land
- Turbo-childhood
- Outside world = dark and dangerous place (Madeleine McCann)
- Media saturation
- Restricted independent movement: traffic and ‘stranger danger’
- Chauffeur-driven generation
Why save nature if you do not love nature?


Common hallmark of environmental activism is prolonged exposure to nature as a child


Parents of Generation Z
- Media influenced – tracking devices for kids
- ‘Theme Park’ parenting v ‘Supermarket’ parenting (One off big experience v basics)
- Protective – my experience at the school fete


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Our schools
Based on traditional adult assumptions

Strict OH&S guidelines


Governmental regulations

Teacher burnout

My Project:

‘Children as environmental change agents: using a negotiated protocol to bring about or support environmentally responsible behaviour in the family home’.

The project

- Case Study.
- Qualitative study.
- Participants: 6 Year 9 students and their families (1 Female and 5 male students/ families of 6 to single parent family of three), semi-rural area.
The structure

- The participants: part of a class undergoing an EEP.
- They design a protocol to take home to their families to co-sign.
- Conduct a personal ecological footprint calculation at home.
- Negotiate and co-sign the protocol.
- Work as a family to meet goals of protocol for 3 months.

Makeup of the Protocol

- Agree on what they are doing and what they would like to do to improve their ecological footprint.
- Establish strategies to ‘keep on track’.
- Focus on three main areas:
  - Physical: veggie patches, low energy light bulbs etc
  - Consumption: use of electricity, water and cars etc
  - Advocacy: joining environmental organisations etc

(Decide on immediate, short term, medium term or long term)
Interview objectives

- Phase 1: just with the students – prepare students
- Phase 2: all participants – environmental makeup?
- Phase 3: all participants – group plans/feelings?
- Phase 4: all participants – results/feelings/suggestions

(after three months)

Findings of the project
**Phase one:**

‘You are never going to say no to something that is going to help. You want to do it’

- Optimism of youth
- Reaction of parents?
- Preparation for position of responsibility?
- Quality of the EEP?
- Impact of technology and consumerism

**Phase two:**

‘If he grabs the ball and starts running with it, I will have to follow’

- Parents and siblings happy: involvement and Protocol
- Parents: pessimism about adolescents
- Parents: pessimism about worth of sacrifices (4/6)
- Families: doing something, but need to do more
- Government should take the lead (4/6)
- Media’s role in providing information
- ‘Job absorption’ (4/6) Male
**Phase three:**

- Protocol good to do as family
- Plan to do small things
- Commitment needed
- Kids positive
- Process easy: particularly list
- Regular meetings planned (5/6)
- Adults took lead (4/6)
- All present at signing (5/6)
- Altruism
- Meetings/ EFC raised awareness
- Disagreement with goals (2/6)

**Final phase:**

- Raised awareness
- Achieved goals/success (2/6)
- Positive changes: environment
- Small changes
- Protocol: good idea/tool
- Family brought together
- Mainly energy and water reduction
- Shared workload (2/6)
- Kids leading role in Protocol (2/6)
- Achieved advocacy goal(s) (1/6)
• Time and lifestyle: critical
• Began well, but… (5/6)
• Communication is key (5/6)
• Families that eat together
• Influence of interviewer (3/6)
• Spoke about it to other families (1/6)

Final recommendations

• Protocol: worthwhile tool
• Needs robust EEP
• Ongoing support by school
• Wider study needed
• Primary schools only?
• Individuality in design
Can we convert the bubble wrap generation into eco warriors?

Yes we can!

- Opportunities
- Tools
- Support
Can you teach an old dog new tricks?