

REPORT TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICT NO.46 (SUNSHINE COAST)

STRATEGIC PLAN REPORT: CARE OF OUR PLANET & ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES

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Goal 1.i.: Our students will have the knowledge and skills to contribute to the **care of our planet** and its changing climate.

Goal 3.d.: Our district will support comprehensive **environmental initiatives**.

'What can Educators do to foster real intelligence? We can attempt to teach the things that one might imagine the earth to teach us: silence, humility, holiness, connectedness, courtesy, beauty, celebration, giving, restoration, obligation and wildness'. -David Orr

OVERVIEW:

In School District 46, we are provincial leaders in environmental education and climate change action. Our educational initiatives (Environmental Leads, outdoor classrooms, school yard gardens, nature play areas, climate marches, NEST programming, Outdoor Education at the high school level) and facilities upgrades (solar panels, LED lighting, waste management, LEED buildings) put the Sunshine Coast on the map as a district committed to care for the more-than-human world.

SYNOPSIS OF THIS YEAR'S INITIATIVES:

Environmental Leads

The role of Environmental Lead is a new initiative in the district. Each school has chosen one staff member to take on the role as conduit between the committee and their school sites. We hosted a very successful first meeting in April to introduce the Leads to one another and begin to build our capacity as a working group. Environmental Leads will be responsible for attending **semi-annual meetings** commencing in September.

Resources for Educators

Our Environmental Education and Climate Change Action Committee have been working to create and source engaging and effective resources for teachers to use. We have an Engage site that all resources are uploaded to and posters of streamlined activities are easily accessible through.

Outdoor classrooms and gardens

Many schools received outdoor structures on their sites over the pandemic. As teachers begin to imagine their purpose for educating, additions such as benches and teaching tools have been

added to structures to enhance the ability to teach within them. Garden expansion has been happening at a number of schools (Chatelech, Langdale, West Sechelt) and teachers are furthering students' education through growing food from seed to plate.

DATA ANALYSIS AND REVIEW:

This year, secondary students were asked in a student led survey what issues/ initiatives they would like us to focus on and the environment came in second only to mental health (*DSL student survey, 2021*). Environmental education results in longer attention spans, more creativity, higher levels of self-confidence, greater academic success, improvements in cognitive development, self- discipline, imaginative and creative expression, language skills and social interactions (*data sources listed below*). Here, on the beautiful Sunshine Coast, our students experience the wonders of nature as an integral part of their learning and are discovering the positive impact that they can make in their part of the world. Our facilities team have made remarkable strides over the last decade to reduce the district's carbon foot print and the interconnectedness between where we learn and how we learn.

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- Louv, R. (2005). *Last child in the woods: Saving our children from nature deficit disorder*. Workman Publishing Company.
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RESOURCES/BUDGET:

In order to support the Environmental Leads initiative, resources will need to be earmarked to support after school meetings for these staff members. As well, continuing to build our library of resources and support staff through workshops will need to be considered in any budgeting decisions.

EMERGING AREAS OF NEED:

As the climate emergency becomes more of a local and global reality, a healthy approach to education around this for our students and staff is being explored. We have begun to work with the SCRD and other invested local organizations to think through awareness and preparedness in our beautiful community.

ADAPTATIONS/NEXT STEPS:

We are proud of our staff for having achieved remarkable growth in environmental education, climate action and facilities upgrades. We will continue to build our capacity through showcasing resources, offering educational workshops, updating the Engage site, and strengthening the role of the Environmental Leads in schools.