**St. Columba’s Learning Story**

**INTRODUCTION**

***A brief description of your school and school community***

St Columba’s Primary School is located in the heart of Bayside’s Elwood village.

Officially opened in 1918, the school facilities have been developed over the years and today accommodate a student population of 154 guided by 24 teaching and education support staff.

The small parish community school has a warm, friendly, family environment where all stakeholders work together to inspire excellence.

We recognise the unique qualities of each person in our school and a key priority is to create an environment with a sense of security and wellbeing. To do this we promote the awareness, understanding and acceptance of individual differences.

Our staff are dedicated to working co-operatively and professionally to achieve a high standard of learning outcomes. In line with this, a second key priority of the school is to provide a comprehensive curriculum - supporting and challenging each individual student in their learning and personal growth.

We continually reflect on and refine our strategies to empower students as learners and to help them develop deep understandings of important issues. This approach better enables students to cultivate critical thinking skills, and ultimately to contribute to society as thoughtful and responsible citizens.

St Columba’s believes that obtaining the best possible learning experiences for our children means working in close partnership with parents. Children need to see that their parents and teachers share common beliefs, attitudes and values, and know that the goals set for their learning are supported both at school and at home. When children experience this shared support they feel more secure and purposeful in their learning. To fulfil this priority, parents are encouraged to be actively involved in the school through both parent helper programs in the classroom and school events.

***A brief description of your school’s sustainability program***

St Columba’s whole-school approach to sustainability is guided by our vision:

*“Our vision at St Columba’s is a school community that respects and cares for the environment. We are responsible for our actions - both at school and in the wider community - and live in a way that has positive impact on the planet. We use our resources wisely, being mindful of the need to have enough for future generations forever.”*

Working closely with the Port Phillip Eco Centre, environmental/ sustainability education has been a key focus of the school, with the delivery of specialist subjects, incursions, excursions, camps and whole school events.

The school has also made a number of achievements to date in the areas of energy, waste, biodiversity and water. These have been delivered across workplace and daily operations, learning and teaching and whole school community engagement.

Recently, a detailed School Environmental Management Plan (SEMP) was developed, incorporating our sustainability policy, green procurement policy, achievements/future priorities, a communications plan and the school curriculum summary.

The policy outlines our future goals to promote an environmentally conscious school and community that engages in a range of sustainability practices.

It is envisaged that the school will lead the community by demonstrating exemplary practices in waste management, water and energy usage and biodiversity.

***When you started the ResourceSmart AuSSI Vic module***

2013

***If you received funding for the module, you may want to mention them here***

No funding received

**I*f you had a ResourceSmart AuSSI Vic facilitator, you may want to mention them here***

April Seymour

**CHALLENGES**

***What did you set out to achieve? What problems/issues did you address during the module?***

The school has also made a number of achievements to date in the areas of energy, waste, biodiversity and water. These have been delivered across workplace and daily operations, learning and teaching and whole school community engagement.

Recently, a detailed School Environmental Management Plan (SEMP) was developed, incorporating our sustainability policy, green procurement policy, achievements/future priorities, a communications plan and the school curriculum summary.

The policy outlines our future goals to promote an environmentally conscious school and community that engages in a range of sustainability practices.

It is envisaged that the school will lead the community by demonstrating exemplary practices in waste management, water and energy usage and biodiversity.

An issue we encountered was orgainsing dates and times for regular meetings. However with good communication via email we were able to overcome this challenge.

Another challenge we faced as a school was beginning the Core Module in 2013, unfortunately the team was not large enough to implement any change. However valuable data was collected over the year and used for the new team.

The school attempted to use more eco-friendly paper for our printers. This was a challenge because the paper kept getting jammed in the photocopier which resulted in poor quality copies. We then decided to return to our original paper suppliers.

**ACTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

***What happened along the way? How did you do it or get there?***

An environmental team at St. Columba’s was founded in 2013 where the Core Module was started; unfortunately the team was not large enough to implement any change. However valuable data was collected over the year and used for the new team.

In 2014 a new team was formed which included a representative from the Eco-Centre, principal, a staff member and parents – having more people on board allowed for real change to occur. The team worked well to achieve the Core Module.

***Who was involved? (e.g. students, student council, environment club, school council, local council, teachers and other school staff, parents and broader community). What were their roles and responsibilities?***

The people involved where: Principal, a staff member, parents, PFA member, April (from the Eco-Centre), and a team of 5 students (Environment Group).

Each member of the team negotiated their responsibilities suitably and fairly during each meeting.

***What did your students learn or experience?***

Over the course of the year the students learnt about sustainability, in particular – how to live more sustainably. They learnt the importance of reducing the rubbish in the playground, recycling paper and other things, composting and reducing the amount of resources needed by changing habits.

***What were your achievements and what outcome or difference did they make? Consider environmental, curricular, financial, social outcomes***

Some initiatives where put in place by the students over the year:

* **Pick up and play on –** the Student Environment Group encouraged all students to pick up rubbish in playground daily, if they achieved a clean playground over the week the whole school was rewarded with extra play. The PFA supplied the school with buckets and tongs to pick up the rubbish with. This made a difference to our environment and had a social outcome as well.
* **Golden lunchbox –** the Student Environment Group would inspect the rubbish bins in each classroom daily, the classroom with the least amount of rubbish over the week earned the Golden Lunchbox (the prize is decided by each classroom teacher for their class). This made a difference to our environment and had a social outcome.
* **Class compost bins –** each classroom was given a compost bin supplied by a 3/4 student. The compost was to be collected at the end of each week and placed in the school’s compost area. This made a difference to our environment and had a curriculum outcome as well.
* **Battery bin –** a 3/4 student orgainised a battery bin for our school. She talked at assembly and in the classrooms to remind students to bring in any old or empty batteries for recycling. This made a difference to our environment and had a curriculum outcome as well.
* **Sauce bottles –** The PFA orgainsed refillable tomato sauce bottles for each classroom. These were to be used instead of the students buying and throwing away the small tomato sauces for their lunch orders. This made a difference to our environment and had a social outcome as well.
* **A change of utility suppliers –** our electricity supplier was changed to a more carbon neutral one, this supplier was also more cost effective. This made a difference to us financially.
* **Community arts project –** an arts program with a sustainability theme throughout. Students chose to be part of a group from their interests e.g. dance, hat making, bottle top murals etc.
* **Walk to school day –** each Term students are encouraged to walk/ride to school. They are given a healthy breakfast upon arrival. This made a difference to our environment and had a social outcome as well.

***Why are these achievements significant to your school community?***

These achievements were very significant to our community; some of them involved engaging and working with the local and school community.

The achievements were significant to our student leadership teams allowing them to create and implement different initiatives which involve and affect the whole school community.

Some of the achievements were financially significant e.g. change of utilities.

***How did you celebrate the achievements?***

At assembly the Student Environment Group give a report about the playground conditions and announce the Golden Lunchbox award.

Articles are placed in the newsletter with updates about events e.g. ride to school day.

The school has a sustainability section and each class has their own blog which they use to report their findings about sustainability.

The school held a Community Arts Expo to showcase their work based on their interest where parents, family members and people in the community where invited.

**REFELCTION AND CONCLUSION**

***What were the top three things you have learnt through doing the module?***

1. By working together as a team with different members of the community goals are made and results can be achieved
2. Involving and engaging the students in different initiatives that are embedded in our curriculum to make a change
3. A heightened awareness of the importance of sustainability in our school

***What worked well, not so well and what would you do differently next time?***

*What worked well –* Having a team, having clear goals, having regular meetings and good communication between team members, working with the school and local community

*What worked not so well* – N/A

*What would you do differently* – Involving another staff member would share the workload

***What’s next? What do you plan to do in the future? (e.g. Which module? Activities? Fundraising, operations, infrastructure procurement or curriculum details etc)***

Energy Module

Implementing student action plans from 2014

Developing school playground

Continue to maintain and build on current initiatives

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

***Where can people find out more about this project? (e.g. Website? School visit? Teacher network?)***

School website