

Learning story – Leadership at APPS

Our school appoints 10 Grade 6 students to be Sustainability Leaders each year. Every Grade 6 student has a leadership role and is responsible for an area of the school. Each week in the Grade 6 timetable there is a Leadership lesson of 50 minutes scheduled. In this time students' work on the actions needed for their leadership role. For Sustainability Leaders there are a range of activities completed in this lesson:

- Entering active travel data into our online tracking system
- Preparing assembly items. Students speak at every assembly on sustainability
- Working in the school garden with garden volunteers
- Preparing and delivering lesson plans to teach younger students about compost, recycling, reusing or nude food
- Planning events such as Ride2School day or the Sustainable Cinema
- Writing to politicians about waste in our environment

In addition, Sustainability Leaders are involved in auditing our school. They have completed biodiversity, waste and litter audits and reported the findings to the school community. Students work with community groups e.g. Port Phillip EcoCentre staff to determine where nesting tubes could be installed in the school grounds. These students also attend the Sustainable Schools Festival at the St Kilda Town Hall each year to deliver Kids Teaching Kids workshops as well as learn about sustainability from students at other schools.

Challenges

Sustainability Leaders at APPS are very busy! It is hard to fit in all the actions we'd like to do to improve sustainability at school and the local community. Sustainability Leaders develop their writing and communication skills as they write many assembly items, Konnective messages and articles for the newsletter. Our leaders learn to be focused and to work collaboratively to get their tasks done in time. Sustainability Leaders are not always confident speakers when they begin the year. However, as these students get many opportunities to speak at assembly and to younger student, they often become excellent public speakers.

An additional challenge with leadership at our school is involving younger students in sustainability actions. In 2017, Grade 4 and 5 students joined the Sustainability Leaders on the Penguin Friendly Project with the Port Phillip EcoCentre and funded by Sustainability Victoria. Projects like these will give students an opportunity to get involved in sustainability learning and actions before Grade 6. Younger grade levels have compost, energy and recycling monitors in their classrooms. These students have a leadership role in making sure the class is operating these systems well. To go forward, our school needs to find more ways to involve younger students in events and actions for sustainability.

In conclusion, the Grade 6 Sustainability Leaders at our school work on a range of sustainability issues and actions each week. They are highly motivated to take on a teaching role for younger students. They enjoy speaking at assembly on a regular basis. Our leadership program for these students is working very well. Our next steps are to include other year levels in regular and ongoing opportunities to take leadership for sustainability.