

# Horizons Region

## Annual Review Summary

2025 - 2026

Enviroschools



### Celebrating 118 Enviroschools across the Horizons Region

#### Creating Sustainable Schools Through Student Action



##### Green Week 2025

This was a new initiative led by Horowhenua College Envirogroup leaders, Ashlee West and Liam Roach. The idea came about from a “protect my backyard” portfolio that the Year 9 students engaged in a couple of years ago. They believed that it would get a lot of buy-in from teachers and students alike, and they sure did – with 1,700 students from 10 schools taking part.

Green week was a week-long competition where students completed a range of activities throughout the week, with a points system for each activity that generated some healthy competition!

A bingo card with 25 mystery activities was only issued to participating schools the night before Green Week started so there could be no pre-planning. Different activities earned different points. Students submitted photos, reels, social media posts and emails as evidence of taura/kaiako/their community taking action.

The end of Green Week was celebrated with a well-attended, hugely successful and student-led awards ceremony at Horowhenua College. There were a number of category awards, individual student awards, and each participating student received a certificate.

Green Week 2026 is already being planned for 2026.



*Green Week at Levin School 2025*



*Green Week at Whanganui Intermediate 2025*



*Prize Giving which was well attended*

## Empowered Learners

Empowered Learners participate in genuine ways in their community. Their unique creativity, perspectives and questions are valued and honoured. They feel connected to the whenua and support each other as a learning community to create meaningful change and hopeful action.



*Learners learning about filtration*

★ Weber School is home to a small creek that runs right through the centre of the grounds. After many years of neglect and being crowded by invasive tree species, the school decided it was time for change. They are supported by the Puketoi to Pacific Catchment Collective, Upper Akitio Catchment Group, Waitahora Catchment Group, Horizons Regional Council, and local iwi. During their initial investigations, students uncovered several issues affecting the creek's health, including rubbish, stock remains, farm waste, and invasive plants. These pressures had caused the water to stagnate, creating an unsafe space for exploration and learning. Students also discovered a significant diesel spill contaminating the stream. Since then, they have deepened their understanding of water quality with a Horizons educator. Each week, the school dedicates time to hands on restoration by removing pest plants, repairing fences, and have hosted a family native planting afternoon to replace invasive species with appropriate natives.



*The Water Story*

### Empowered Learners in Action



★ Brunswick School have been on their sustainability journey for a while and are always looking for ways to empower their tamariki to build a sustainable future. The student enviro-group had a cool idea to upcycle pallets into furniture to sell at their Agricultural day. With the support of their facilitator and a retired community member, Ron, who makes pallet furniture, the students went about sourcing pallets from their community and looked at different designs. Tamariki learnt about measure twice and cut once. They used handsaw, drills and impact drivers correctly and safely to cut and assemble the furniture. They were stoked to make a long bench seat and a table in no time at all. But the work didn't stop there, they also learnt how to use sewing machines to make cushions to go with the chairs.



*Pallet table completed*

★ After taking part in the regional Enviroschools ECE teacher Hui in May 2025, pouako from Linton Kindergarten left with a goodie bags filled with ideas and projects – one being how to create a lizard garden. This sparked curiosity in their tamariki and there has been an ongoing interest to create one ever since. Tamariki have been keen to join in, offering ideas and drawing talents, adding to the design of the lizard garden plan. Tamariki have also been doing a bit of research about lizards and what they need. After weeks of planning.... researching.... chatting about and playing with the lizard garden map, they put it all into action and made a rather wonderful 3-dimensional space for any lizards that might be passing by to live in.

## Learning for Sustainability

Learning for Sustainability is a holistic, action and future-focused approach to learning, that engages our whole selves and addresses all aspects of our local and global environment.

### Learning for Sustainability in Action

★ In the spring, Enviroschools in Tararua came together for a cluster workshop on fruit tree pruning. Many schools/centres have fruit trees but many do not know how to look after them to ensure there is a healthy supply of fruit. Lead by local horticulturalist, Ewen, students and staff learnt pruning techniques, seasonal orchard care, tool maintenance and cleaning, and to use professional pruning tools safely and effectively. Everyone also had the chance to prune a variety of orchard trees themselves, putting new skills into action. The workshop was not only educational but also a wonderful opportunity to strengthen connections with other Enviroschools teachers and facilitators. Following the workshop, students/staff were keen to return to their schools to prune their orchards while the Tararua College student enviro-club members planned to finish pruning their orchard. The hope is that this workshop could be repeated in 2026.

★ Christmas decorations are often not made with sustainability in mind and are often disposed of after use. Tamariki at some of the early childhood centres made tree decorations with their facilitator from plywood offcuts from Feilding's Makerspace cut into templates which were then filled with a wet shredded paper mix embedded with vege seeds. Tamariki took their ornaments home for their own trees which can then be planted in the garden to grows some delicious kai.



*Workshop attendee pruning a fruit tree at Tararua College*



*Demonstration on how to prune*



*Kaiako at Massey Childcare helping tamariki make tree decorations*

★ Riverdale Kindergarten (Palmerston North) became 'yoghurt pouch and pottle free' by eliminating single use, non-recyclable plastics and introducing making our own yoghurt, which is provided at morning tea. This was a 'whole community' process over the course of the year, encouraging buy in from whānau and tamariki. The Esiyo yoghurt sachets (and fruit to go with it) is provided by whānau and is mostly made by whānau at the kindergarten. Although it took almost a year to get to this point, it is now part of the Riverdale kaupapa and has been embraced by tamariki, whānau and pouako. We are really proud of the journey and the result.

## Te Ao Māori

Te Ao Māori holds insights, knowledge and ways of being in relation to the taiao. Honouring this acknowledges the intrinsic relationship of tangata whenua with this land. When we are envisioning and taking action for a sustainable future in our community, we are guided by the history, knowledge, tikanga, traditions and aspirations of local hapū.

### Te Ao Māori in Action



★ The kaupapa at Paraone Kindergarten this year was centred on deepening the knowledge of their tamariki, kaiako, and whānau in traditional Māori practices, with a particular focus on rongoā and pūrākau. Through hands-on learning, storytelling, and community involvement, they have nurtured a living curriculum, one that grows from the soil beneath our feet and reaches into the whakapapa of place and people. The project followed a full cycle of learning, beginning with the cultivation of their māra kai and rongoā garden. Tamariki planted, tended, and observed the growth of native plants and kūmara, learning the stories, atua, and tikanga connected to each. Local experts shared mātauranga, strengthening intergenerational knowledge and grounding our learning in authentic community practice. Tamariki are confidently using te reo Māori and referencing atua and pūrākau in daily learning, sharing that with whanau, deepening the learning, stories and traditional practices. There is a sense of identity, and kaitiakitanga.



*Paraone tamariki with their kūmara harvest*

★ Tokomanawa Classroom at Bulls School have added te reo Māori labels to all their native trees in their school to further their understanding of the cultural significance of the trees. They say the most pleasing aspect of this exercise has been growing the understanding amongst the students that their school ngahere is not just 'bush' but a diverse collection of local trees that have special identities and characteristics.



*Harvest time at Ballance School*

★ In revitalising their gardens and supporting students to develop practical gardening skills, Ballance School have been exploring the Māori planting guide and learning about maramataka and the lunar calendar. Every decision made in the garden was viewed through an environmental sustainability lens. The garden has become a shared space where students, staff, whānau, and community members contribute to a collective vision of kaitiakitanga. As students reconnected with the space, there was clear evidence of empowered learners emerging, as the students spent more of their own time in the garden, exploring, tending, and eating fresh produce straight from the beds. This was a significant shift, as many had not engaged with the garden in this way before or for some time.

★ Last year, after being inspired by a workshop session on harakeke care and tikanga, Ruahine Milson Kindergarten worked with one of the Enviroschools team to tidy their plants and use the trimmed to show the tamariki and pouako how to make whētū/stars. With Matariki approaching, this was a great way for them to think about the meaning of Matariki, look at the stars of the Matariki cluster, Maumaharatia - remembering our past, Tiakina te taiao - caring for our environment and Te whakawhanaungatanga - connecting with our people.

## Respect for Diversity

Respect for Diversity is celebrated, and all forms of identity and ability are respected to foster a society that is fair, peaceful and cooperative. Cultural traditions and practices from all people are experienced, valued and appreciated in learning spaces, honouring practices led by that community. Access to safe and engaging learning is available to everyone.

### Respect for Diversity in Action



★ Bunnythorpe School have been doing an inquiry around pest animals and wanted to share their learnings with their community. They did this in an extraordinary way by putting on a school production. ‘Guardians of the Bush’ was an amazing performance of how pest animals are having an impact in our forests, where student leaders took up the challenge to track what pest animals they had, and set up a pest control project to take action. This included a human-sized pest trap. Tamariki did an amazing job on stage singing and dancing, while telling the audience about what actions they can take to be guardians of the bush.



*Tamariki performing to the community*

★ Bringing all students at a school along on a sustainability journey can be hard as not all want to get their hands dirty. Glen Ōroua School set up a range of enviro-ropū and assigned students based on their passions and interests, with groups created based on a range of action projects which the student enviro-leaders had identified when creating their whole school vision for sustainability. Each student group is responsible for guiding their own learning, planning and implementation of projects across the school and wider community. A parent helper and/or community member is assigned to help each group, but their role is only to provide expertise and support, as it is the students who lead the group and make all the decisions. Planning and progress is documented in scrapbooks at each fortnightly meeting and during the termly Enviro Day.

★ “Go Green Day” was the first enviro day for Bulls School. This idea came about because the staff wanted a day set aside for learning for sustainability and celebration. The whole school including staff, wore green mufti and participated in enviro-based activities throughout the day. These included traditional Māori games with Sport Manawatū, exploring renewable energy with wind, forest school activities in their native bush on the school grounds which included fire starting and safety, bug hunts and hut building. Other activities included native plant identification and activities and learning about the importance of water through the River Story activity ran by their Enviroschools facilitator.



*Glen ōroua - enviro-ropū 2025*



*Go Green Day - Bulls School 2025*

## Sustainable Communities

Sustainable Communities act in ways that nurture all aspects of nature, including people, now and in the future. By working together and supporting each other we create safe, healthy, equitable and thriving communities.



### Sustainable Communities in Action

★ A unique collaboration between the Manawatū Community Hub Libraries (MCHL) Makerspace and Enviroschools is transforming waste into wonder one plywood offcut at a time. The Makerspace, a hub for community innovation and sustainable practice, has found a new purpose for the scrap material generated by its laser-cutting projects. Instead of sending plywood offcuts straight to the landfill, staff collect them in a dedicated bin for reuse. These offcuts are now being used by school children across the region in creative classroom projects. Powered by one of the Enviroschools facilitators, every few weeks the discarded shapes and offcuts are collected and delivered to schools and centres within the Enviroschools network, where students use them as stencils, design elements, and raw materials for art projects.

★ Over the course of the year, teachers from across Feilding, Rangitīkei and Horowhenua have come together in three inspiring Enviroschools workshops focused on waste minimisation and sustainable practices. They dived into the Enviroschools Zero Waste theme area booklet, which is a great resource to get ideas from and use with tamariki for sustainable learning. One workshop featured a guest speaker from Smart Environmental, who shared insights into recycling systems in the Manawatū region. Teachers exchanged ideas on how to embed zero waste principles into their environments, with many expressing interests in exploring other Enviroschools theme areas in future sessions. In Horowhenua, approximately 20 teachers attended a ‘re-visiting waste’ hui. The workshop was co-facilitated with the solid waste team from Horowhenua District Council, who we partner with in delivering the Enviroschools programme to schools/centres in the district. Teachers shared their current waste minimisation practices and the challenges they face in setting up waste diversion systems in their school/centre. They also learnt how to conduct a waste audit and use this to measure whether their waste minimisation systems are working. Across all events, teachers valued the opportunity to connect with peers and council staff, gaining practical knowledge and discovering new ways to strengthen sustainability in their centres, and learning what support is available. They all came away with ideas to take action on their waste streams to reduce how much goes to landfill



*Attendees hearing from the district council solid waste team*



*Teachers learning to run a waste audit*

★ Students from St George’s School, Whanganui completed a hikoi along the beach from Mowhanau to Castlecliff as they explored the concept of mountains to sea. They looked at water as a life source and a personal being, and what it means to them as a school and a community. A DOC ranger supported their walk providing information about the landscape, rocks, fossils and sand dunes. Their next trip is to follow the Whanganui river from its source, looking at changing landscape as it flows towards to town, learning the stories that connect to their school

## Creating Connection Across Manawatū-Whanganui Through Hui

A key part of our role is fostering student leadership and advancing teachers' professional capability in environmental education. We facilitate multiple hui throughout Manawatū-Whanganui for various age groups, including separate sessions for educators and school leaders. These gatherings strengthen the Enviroschools kaupapa by linking schools' sustainability pathways and enabling shared learning to inform future initiatives.

### Teachers connect from the Mountain to the Sea at Regional Enviroschools Hui

Late March brought together 46 teachers from 21 schools across the region, who joined community group representatives in Horowhenua for our regional Enviroschools teacher hui. The theme was Mountain to the Sea, where participants explored a series of local environments that showcased the region's rich ecological diversity. The hui involved visits to a new predator-free site, followed by a walk through a beautiful bush remnant. From there, the group moved towards the sea, where they were welcomed by Poroutawhao School students who led an engaging tour of their outdoor classroom. The day concluded at Waitārere Beach, where teachers immersed themselves in the coastal habitats, learning about coastal plants, seabirds and coastal webs of life. Attendees left feeling inspired, energised, and connected, with many taking away fresh ideas, new relationships, and renewed enthusiasm to bring back to their schools. It was a powerful reminder of the impact that shared experiences in nature can have on both teaching practice and community building.

### Fundamentals of native plant propagation

Over 60 teachers from schools and early childhood centres attended the workshops held in Taumarunui, Palmerston North, and Feilding to learn about seed preparation and sowing, how to propagate with cuttings, and division, where mature plants are divided into multiple smaller plants. One of the key takeaways is that these fundamental principles can be used for all plants, not just natives. These workshops were held in response to requests from teachers wanting to become more confident in this space to then share this knowledge with their students.



*Teachers at Waitarere Beach*

### Forgotten fauna empowering students

February saw an unforgettable day of discovery at Cherry Grove/Ngā Huinga, Taumarunui, where students, educators, and community partners gathered to celebrate our Forgotten Fauna. The event was supported by Department of Conservation, MPI On-farm Support, NZ Landcare Trust, Whanganui Region Catchment Collective and Sport Whanganui. Around 133 students from 11 schools across the district came together to explore some of Aotearoa's lesser-known native species, with hands-on sessions about pekapeka/bats, mokomoko/lizards, and a range of unusual invertebrates that often go unnoticed but play vital roles in our ecosystems. They also learnt about pest animals, and the impact these introduced species have on our ecosystem and native species. The day was filled with curiosity, and connection, to celebrate the unique wildlife that surrounds us, and the communities working hard to protect it.



*Native plant propagation workshop*



*Wellington Green Gecko at Forgotten Fauna*

# Enviroschools Team



## Manawatū-Whanganui Outcomes for 2025-2026

Enviroschools in region have made significant strides in fostering environmental kaitiakitanga and sustainability within its communities. Schools have embraced a holistic approach to environmental education, integrating sustainability and respect for diversity into their curriculum and daily activities. For most schools, there has been notable progress in enhancing biodiversity, reducing carbon footprints, and promoting waste minimisation initiatives, with many schools achieving or exceeding their sustainability goals.

The involvement of students, teachers, and local communities has reinforced a collective commitment to safeguarding the environment for future generations. Schools have worked closely with local organisations and iwi, furthering a sense of shared responsibility for the environment. The collaborative efforts have led to the development of innovative projects such as native plant restoration, sustainable gardening, and water conservation initiatives.

### Facilitator Spotlight - Rowena Brown

I have been passionate about the environment my whole life, and one of my earliest memories is walking with my grandfather through the bush and him teaching me all about the plants and animals. This led to a science degree and from there I became more and more aware of the importance of environmental education for there to be any real and lasting change for nature.

As Baba Dioum once said:

"In the end, we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand; and we will understand only what we are taught."

My role as an Enviroschools facilitator covers 28 Enviroschools across the Manawatū, Rangitīkei and Tararua districts. And after 13 years in the job, I still love it! My favourite part of the job is seeing tamariki get involved and excited about the world around them. It is seeing their eyes opened to the beauty and complexity of it all, just like I experienced with my grandfather so long ago.



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