

# Growing Sustainability Through Environmental Action!

**Name of the School:** Golden Grove High School

## Our context

Golden Grove High School (GGHS) is a co-ed secondary school located in Golden Grove, Adelaide. It's a large school with a student population of over 1500 and 150 staff. The school is recognised as a Centre of Excellence in the Arts and offers many specialist courses and programs, including programs relating to sustainability. GGHS has a well-established Environmental Action Team (EAT) with members from a cross-section of the school community, whose practices are guided by their Site Environment Management Plan (SEMP). Registered with the Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative South Australia (AuSSI-SA) since 2011, GGHS ensures that as a school they play an active role in educating themselves, their students and the wider community on sustainable lifestyles.

## Our vision and values for a more sustainable world

Golden Grove High School has a long term focus on sustainability, through special programs, community events and having sustainability embedded into curriculum. GGHS's vision is:

*"to have an educated and informed school community that recognises that they have a moral responsibility (personally and collectively) for the environment, and that motivates action through knowledge and respect for the environment around us. Our school is actively working towards intra-generational equality; ensuring future generations benefit from our efforts in engaging with sustainable practices."*

The school recognises that they must lead the way and not only highlight the importance of being sustainable, but be role models by implementing relevant strategies and highlighting that individuals and small actions can make a difference.

## Our sustainability initiatives

In 2015, GGHS has implemented a range of strategies to promote sustainability at a whole school and community level. Some of these include:

- Reduction in paper use through revised Learning and Assessment Plan distribution.
- Created a 'Sustainability Wall' in the staffroom that promotes the actions of the EAT E.g. processes for recycling folders, plastic slips and batteries.
- Established a 'Farmers Market' where staff swap excess home-grown or homemade products.
- Started an EAT newsletter that is distributed once per term electronically to staff and parents that includes sustainability practices that can transferred from school to home.
- Created more sustainability based projects in classes across the school to strengthen the connections between sustainability and the school curriculum. E.g. The Environmental Movement unit in the Year 10 History course now has an anti-littering campaign embedded within in.
- Formation of a student Green Team.
- Updated and improved the school's EAT component of the website to share initiatives and successes.
- Completed an audit of connections to curriculum to promote communication and reflection on how staff teach and learn sustainability within the school.



## Curriculum connections

GGHS is continuing to explore connections to the curriculum to ensure that sustainability is incorporated across multiple learning areas.

In addition to this, GGHS also offers specialist courses related to environmental sustainability. These include:

- The Land Care Program. Made up of Year 9 students interested in being involved in the school's sustainability practices. In particular, this class runs the paper recycling program and creates notepads using recycled paper from classrooms.
- Certificate II in Conservation and Land Management. This class is currently involved in a joint-project with Home Economics classes, where they are creating planter boxes with a range of vegetables and herbs.
- A Green Team who meet once a fortnight and are responsible for a number of sustainability-related initiatives across the school. They recently encouraged staff and students to bring in their old mobile phones to be recycled and educated the school community of the associated environmental impacts.
- Student Voice Program. Several students have taken on an active role in the EAT. They run sessions with the entire school regarding sustainable practices and play an integral role in giving the much valued student perspective on environmental issues and events within the community.

## Connecting with community

GGHS has developed a number of strong partnerships with organisations to assist them with their sustainability journey. Some of these include NRM Education, KESAB Environmental Solutions, Tea Tree Gully Council and most recently, the Department for Environment, Water and Natural Resources.

GGHS recognises the importance of sharing and celebrating achievements, and does this through school assemblies, at year level meetings, and at staff meetings. The school communicates with

the wider school community via the newly created EAT newsletter, school newsletter articles, and presentations.

## NRM Education support

NRM Education has supported GGHS in many ways over the last four years. From providing resources and advice, professional development opportunities, participation in the High School Cluster Youth Forum, student representation on the Youth Environment Council of South Australia, and linking with other service provider opportunities. NRM Education Officers are members of the EAT and provide assistance with the Site Environment Management Plan, future visioning, sustainability ideas, linking sustainability to the curriculum, and setting Education for Sustainability goals (EfS).

## Outcomes

The most significant outcome from the range of initiatives at GGHS this past year is the increased engagement of students in sustainable practices. There are an ever-growing number of students attending EAT meetings (outside of school hours) and the number of students selecting to participate in the Land Care Program as their elective is increasing every semester. As a new initiative, the formation of the Green Team is another positive step forward towards achieving the schools EfS goals. A majority of these students were previously disengaged and felt disconnected from the learning process. These students have since flourished by being part of the Green Team because they feel that they are truly making a difference and see the importance in the work that they do. By giving these students the opportunity to participate in hands-on sustainability work, they have had an increase in confidence that they can be successful at school. Students are also coming up with their own projects and running them independently rather than doing them because they feel they have to.

GGHS staff are also becoming more engaged in conversations around sustainability. Staff are becoming more conscious of paper usage, and there has been an increase in the amount of materials recycled such as folders and plastic slips. There has also been an increase in staff members joining the EAT, who bring fresh perspectives and ideas. Staff outside of the EAT



have also become more active in organising and running environmental sustainability projects.

## Next steps

GGHS will continue to embed sustainability even further within the curriculum and promote outdoor learning opportunities to staff. A key EfS goal identified by the EAT to help achieve this will be to support staff in understanding sustainability and how it can be taught.

The recently formed partnership between the Department for Environment, Water and Natural Resources, and the local Kurna people will continue to be strengthened over the coming year. In partnership with Park Rangers from Cobbler Creek Recreation Park, and a local Kurna man, students will visit and participate in hands-on activities within the Park. Activities include learning about local flora and fauna, European settlement and the impact of urbanisation, and appreciate indigenous land management and culture. This will engage students in a sustainability project within their local area, providing an authentic learning experience. It is envisioned, that GGHS will take ownership of a patch within the Park and work with the Department to maintain and enhance the area, whilst utilising it for learning opportunities. The partnership will assist GGHS work towards their vision of extending sustainable practices into the wider community by doing something to help the environment beyond the school context.

The next step for the EAT is to evaluate where they are headed using NRM Education's Core Indicators Tool. This will enable to group to reflect on what they have achieved so far and assist them with setting new EfS goals and what they would like to do next. GGHS will continue to work on achieving its existing EfS goals with the whole school and wider school community. They will maintain the wide range of existing sustainability initiatives already in practice at the school, continue to share and celebrate achievements, and strengthen the role and profile of the EAT in embedding sustainability into the culture at GGHS.

## For more information

### Golden Grove High School

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The school includes articles on sustainability initiatives in their newsletters which can be found at:

<http://www.goldengrovehs.sa.edu.au/our-school/environmental-action-team.html>

### For other similar case studies by NRM Education:

[www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/adelaidentloftyranges/](http://www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/adelaidentloftyranges/)



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