



Observatory Hill Environmental Education Centre Annual Report 2015



2015

Introduction

The Annual Report for 2015 is provided to the community of Observatory Hill Environmental Education Centre as an account of the school's operations and achievements throughout the year.

It provides a detailed account of the progress the school has made to provide high quality educational opportunities for all students, as set out in the school plan. It outlines the findings from self-assessment that reflect the impact of key school strategies for improved learning and the benefit to all students from the expenditure of resources, including equity funding.

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Acting Principal

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Message from the Principal

Observatory Hill EEC's period of cultural and physical transformation continues as the school embraces new ways of operating and doing business and progressively moves to a shared campus as part of a new Observatory Hill Education Precinct. Guided by a new school plan, and the school excellence framework, the school has set clear strategic directions and performance measures that will help it deliver on its vision of *"promoting sustainability education, providing diverse learning experiences in urban settings and inspiring school communities to act sustainably"*.

This year, school visitation increased by 96%, due to the staff's focus on quality teaching and learning and the increase marketing of the center's services to schools. The anticipated future growth of the Centre will pose a challenge in the next few years, as the Observatory Hill Education Precinct plans progress. The Centre will embrace these temporary changes, including a future reduction in Centre teaching space, in anticipation of a new Environmental Education Centre to be built within the Observatory Hill Education Precinct.

The Centre continues to deliver innovative excursion programs, recently involving the nearby Barangaroo Point Park, and through partnerships with the Barangaroo Delivery Authority, Lend Lease and Urban Growth NSW.

A new school community feedback mechanism was developed as part of our new 2015-17 school plan that will ensure the Centre continues to develop a service culture and learns as an organization how to better support client school's needs.

The strengthening partnership with the Environmental and Zoo Education Centres (EZEC) learning community has seen more networking and resource sharing opportunities, particularly with Student Environmental leadership programs.

I have been privileged to be able to lead the school through this exciting transformational period and look forward to continued improvements in delivery of sustainability and environmental education programs.

I certify that the information in this report is the result of a rigorous school self-evaluation process and is a balanced and genuine account of the school's achievements and areas for development.

Advisory Council Message

Observatory Hill Environmental Education Centre continues to set innovative and inclusive programs since its inception over 25 years ago. The range of activities for our children and their teachers is reflective of the dynamic environment from which these activities are offered. Students and teachers can come to one of Sydney's unique and iconic locations or the Centre can come to them. This flexible approach has enabled even more children benefiting from the expertise of a range of teachers and engaging material. I am happy to write this short note of praise for the Centre and congratulate the staff who once again have delivered a year of wonderful learning opportunities to enhance our children's education.

Dr. Adrienne F Keane.
President, Observatory Hill EEC Advisory Council

School background

School vision statement

Centre Vision Statement

To promote Sustainability Education, provide diverse learning experiences in an urban context and inspire schools and their communities to act responsibly towards their environment.

Environmental and Zoo Education Centers (EZEC) Network Vision

To support NSW Public Schools to implement sustainability education through meaningful learning experiences in and about the natural, built and cultural environment. We strive to be the leaders in providing students with the skills, values and opportunities to act as responsible citizens.

School context

Observatory Hill Environmental Education Centre (OHEEC) is one of 25 Environmental and Zoo Education Centres (EZEC) operated by the NSW Department of Education.

These specialised schools make up a learning community that lead schools in the implementation of environmental and sustainability education through experiential learning opportunities in both built and natural environments. They also provide support and advice to teachers and school communities (including professional learning opportunities) to assist them to integrate environmental education objectives across *Key Learning Areas* and sustainably manage school grounds and resources.

Due to its location, adjacent to Sydney's CBD and historic Rocks precinct, the Centre:

- Provides unique, authentic and engaging experiential learning opportunities in the urban environment
- Works with a variety of commercial, government and community partners to enrich learning opportunities
- Is easily accessible via public transport and draws students from across Sydney and regional NSW

OHEEC also uses other inner urban sites, works in schools and presents at educational events. The Centre delivers environmental programs and professional learning opportunities to thousands of K-12 students and teachers each year. OHEEC caters for all students including Aboriginal students and/or students from areas of socio-economic disadvantage, and offers differentiated learning experiences to schools, to provide for a range of learning needs including gifted and talented, mental and physical disadvantage and students at risk of disengagement. Teachers booking Centre programs are offered a variety of support to ensure the services meets their needs. This support includes phone conversations (covering program logistics, special needs of students, syllabus links, learning experiences, resources and risk assessments), program packs and online pre and post excursion resource support.

Self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework

This section of the Annual Report outlines the findings from self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework, our school achievements and the next steps to be pursued. The Framework supports public schools throughout NSW in the pursuit of excellence by providing a clear description of high quality practice across the three domains of Learning, Teaching and Leading.

This year, our school undertook self-assessment using elements of the School Excellence Framework in the following areas.

Learning

There is school-wide, collective responsibility for student learning and success, with high levels of student, staff and community engagement.

The school consistently implements a whole-school approach to wellbeing that has clearly defined behavioural expectations and creates a positive teaching and learning environment.

The school establishes active partnerships and works collaboratively to ensure continuity of learning for students.

Curriculum programs and teaching practices effectively develop the knowledge, understanding and skills of all students, using evidence-based teaching practices and innovative delivery mechanisms where appropriate.

Experiential learning opportunities are significant, support student development, and are strongly aligned with the school's vision, values and priorities.

The school analyses internal and external assessment data to monitor, track and report on student performance.

Teaching

The school leadership team demonstrates instructional leadership, promoting and modelling effective, evidence based practice.

Teachers analyse and use student data assessment to understand the learning needs of students.

School wide and/or interschool relationships provide mentoring and coaching support to ensure the ongoing development of all staff.

The school is recognised as an expert in the provision of sustainability education to teachers.

The teaching staff of the school demonstrate and share expertise, have very high levels of contemporary content knowledge and teaching practices, and rely on evidence-based teaching strategies.

Leadership

The school leadership team makes deliberate and strategic use of its partnerships and relationships to access resources for the purpose of enriching the school's standing within the local community and improving student outcomes.

Monitoring evaluation and review processes are embedded and undertaken regularly.

Workforce planning supports curriculum provision and recruitment of high quality staff.

Physical learning spaces are used flexibly and technology is accessible to all staff.

There are opportunities for students and the community to provide constructive feedback on school practices and procedures.

Our self-assessment process will further assist the school to refine the strategic priorities in our School plan leading to further improvements in the delivery of education to our students.

Strategic Direction 1

Improving environmental and sustainability learning outcomes for all students

Purpose

To support all students develop positive knowledge, skills, values and attitudes towards the environment by engaging in meaningful and contextually relevant experiential learning that inspires them to become environmentally responsible citizens and environmental leaders in order to help sustain and improve natural and cultural environments.

Overall summary of progress

To improve environmental and sustainability outcomes for all students, OHEEC has:

- Provided stimulating and meaningful programs that inculcate positive knowledge, skills, values and attitudes towards the environment and inspire them to become champions for the environment.
- Fostered a school culture of organisational learning and team leadership to enable collaborative sharing of best practice teaching strategies.
- Ensured visiting teachers support the learning outcomes of Centre programs by ensuring students are adequately prepared for their program, actively participate, and follow up with activities and actions that support and reinforce the positive knowledge, skills, values and attitudes developed.
- Sourced new, and strengthen existing, partnerships to provide opportunities to enrich programs and enhance the quality and quantity of learning experiences.

These activities have resulted in an increase in bookings and an increase in the percentage of students indicating positive knowledge skills, values and attitudes towards the environment as indicated below.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures		Resources (annual)
Improvement measure (to be achieved over 3 years)	Progress achieved this year	\$4438
Increase in bookings	There has been a 96% increase in student visitation from 2014 – 2015. This has been due to a flexible, school focused approach to programming, constant reviewing of all programs to ensure syllabus relevance, presentation at teachers associations and a principal and teacher survey to determine the best mix of programs for client schools.	\$250
Evaluation data showing an increase in the percentage of students indicating positive knowledge skills, values and attitudes towards the environment.	All teachers have been trained in effective delivery so that 2015 visiting teacher evaluation data showed: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 96% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the programs enhanced student engagement in, and understanding of the urban environment.• 95% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the experience promoted positive values and attitudes in student towards the environment.	\$4188

Next steps

OHEEC will continue to

- Consult with teachers and school leaders to determine the best mix of programs for their school and class contexts.
- Collaborate with the EZEC network to share existing programs and expertise.
- Collaborate on personalised teacher professional learning plans to ensure staff have the requisite knowledge and skills to teach environmental outcomes effectively.
- Ensure visiting teachers are familiar with pre and post program support materials.

Strategic Direction 2

Fostering quality teaching and leadership in environmental and sustainability education

Purpose

To build the capacity of OHEEC and NSW school teachers to lead school their communities towards a culture of sustainability and support the development of environmentally responsible citizens by modeling best practice Environmental Education (EE) and Education for Sustainability (EFS), offering professional learning opportunities and working with teachers to improve sustainability learning outcomes for all students.

Overall summary of progress

To foster quality teaching and leadership in environmental and sustainability education OHEEC:

- Provided programs and support for student environmental leaders
- Provided professional learning opportunities for Centre staff and NSW teachers to help them successfully integrate EE and EFS into their teaching and learning programs and practices.
- Encouraged school leaders to utilise EEC professional learning opportunities to develop school cultures focused on environmental responsibility.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures		Resources (annual)
Improvement measure (to be achieved over 3 years)	Progress achieved this year	\$1531
Increase in student leadership opportunities	OHEEC has been working with the EZEC to develop the GoMad (Make a Difference) student environmental leadership program. This program involved a Youth Forum at Taronga Zoo for 231 students, a youth leadership camp for 22 students , in-school support with sustainability projects, and student presentations at the Youth Eco Summit (involving over 3 000 students from more than 85 schools over two days) .	\$70
Increase in number of teachers undertaking professional learning courses (including fieldwork courses), and an increase in the variety of professional learning courses offered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OHEEC staff attended the EZEC annual conference, and the NSW Australian Association of Environmental Educators Conference as part of their professional learning plans • OHEEC developed, coordinated and delivered sessions at the EZEC Principals conference, held annually at OHEEC. • OHEEC offered professional learning courses on sustainability to 86 teachers. Participant evaluation data shows; 77% agreed or strongly agreed that the course enabled them to engage in professional development to extend and refine teaching and learning practices. 81% agreed or strongly agreed that the course was a valuable professional learning activity. 	\$792 \$469 \$200

Next steps

OHEEC will continue to work with the EZEC network to further develop the GoMad student environmental leadership project. A teacher professional learning component has been included in this project for 2016. Observatory Hill EEC took the lead in organizing and submitting the professional learning course “*Supporting Student Environmental Leadership*” which will be run in conjunction with the 2016 Youth Enviro Forum and will be available to be offered by all Environmental and Zoo Education Centres. A further course will also be developed to further support school ‘sustainability’ leaders.

OHEEC has also developed the course *Integrating the Sustainability Cross Curriculum Priority*, which will be the key sustainability course offered by all NSW Environmental and Zoo Education Center’s, including OHEEC on School Development Days.

Strategic Direction 3

Building stronger partnerships for delivery of Environmental Education

Purpose

To improve the quality and quantity of environmental / sustainability education experiences offered by the centre, in order to support the development of environmentally responsible citizens

Overall summary of progress

OHEEC helped build stronger partnerships for delivery of Environmental Education by:

- Developing local and EZEC partnership opportunities, and using their physical, financial and human resources, to enrich teaching and learning programs.
- Leading the EZEC Leadership and Management Portfolio through a number of projects including the development of a common vision and strategic directions, a common evaluation strategy to track EZEC effectiveness and the development of a generic sustainability education course.
- Supporting EEC staff to contribute to regular portfolio meetings, develop and achieve portfolio goals and maintain regular communication across the network.
- Engaging with individual and *Communities Of Schools* leaders to increase participation by schools in EZEC programs and services.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures		Resources (annual)
Improvement measure (to be achieved over 3 years)	Progress achieved this year	\$962
EZEC Portfolio Strategic Directions developed, acted on and completed and vision 2015-2107 developed	OHEEC led the <i>Leadership and Management</i> Portfolio through a number of projects in 2015 including the development and coordination of the Annual EZEC Principals conference an EZEC common vision and strategic directions, a common evaluation strategy to track EZEC effectiveness and the development of generic sustainability education courses. Many Centres have used the common strategic directions and vision in their school plans.	\$0
Common EZEC evaluation data developed and analysed for systemic improvements	The EZEC Evaluation Strategy was completed in 2015 for implementation in 2016. This strategy allows EZEC network members to electronically collect common data to track and demonstrate their effectiveness.	\$962
Increasing partnerships developed (involving financial, physical and human resources) leading to increasing participation in EEC programs	OHEEC continues to seek partnerships to enrich teaching and learning programs. Strategic financial, physical and human resources have been sourced from local businesses, Barangaroo Delivery Authority, Lend Lease, Urban Growth NSW, The City Of Sydney and the Greenway Sustainability Education Program.	\$0

Next steps

OHEEC will continue to develop partnerships both locally, and with the EZEC network, to enrich it's teaching and learning programs. This will involve a greater alliance with NSW Urban Growth to develop new Geography programs in the Bays Precinct, as well as with the City of Sydney for Senior Geography.

OHEEC will continue to coordinate and collaborate on future projects of the EZEC *Systems Leadership Initiative* under the three strategic directions of *Learning, Teaching and Partnerships*. OHEEC will also continue to work collaboratively with Fort St PS to achieve the best possible learning outcomes for both schools in a time of physical transition to an Observatory Hill Education Precinct.

Key initiatives and other school focus areas

Key initiatives (annual)	Impact achieved this year	Resources (annual)
Aboriginal background funding	No funding received in 2015	\$0
English language proficiency funding	No funding received in 2015	\$0
Targeted students support for refugees and new arrivals	No funding received in 2015	\$0
Socio-economic funding	No funding received in 2015	\$0
Low level adjustment for disability funding	No funding received in 2015	\$0
Support for beginning teachers	No funding received in 2015	\$0

Student information

It is a requirement that the reporting of information for all students be consistent with privacy and personal information policies.

Student enrolment profile (mandatory)

No. of students: 7,934

No. of Regions served: 10

	Primary	Secondary	Total
No. of schools served	56	98	154

Student attendance profile

Visitation by Stage:

Stage	ES1/ 1	2	3	4	5	6
Year	K-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	11-12
%	10	10	15	5	20	40

Workforce information

Reporting of information for all staff must be consistent with privacy and personal information policies.

Workforce composition

Position	Number
Principal	1
Deputy Principal(s)	
Assistant Principal(s)	
Head Teacher(s)	
Classroom Teacher(s) (shared position)	2
Teacher of Reading Recovery	
Learning and Support Teacher(s)	
Teacher Librarian	
Teacher of ESL	
School Counsellor	
School Administrative & Support Staff	2
Other positions	
Total	5

Aboriginal workforce composition - Nil.

The Acting Principal and casual teaching staff are supported by a School Administrative Manager and a part-time general assistant. The Acting Principal and School Administrative Manager have worked at the Centre for many years. The teacher's position is shared between two experienced environmental education teachers, and several casual staff who are being trained in the delivery of all Centre programs.

Teacher qualifications

All teaching staff meet the professional requirements for teaching in NSW public schools.

Qualifications	% of staff
Undergraduate degree or diploma	100%
Postgraduate degree	66%

Professional learning and teacher accreditation

The Acting Principal and one teacher are accredited at Proficient. One teacher is seeking accreditation at Proficient. All staff completed professional learning as part of their Professional Development Plans and participated in the delivery of a registered professional learning course on the scheduled School Development Days.

All staff at Observatory Hill EEC accessed a range of professional learning throughout 2015.

Professional learning activities included:

Mandatory Training (Permanent and casual staff)

Annual Environmental and Zoo Education Centre Conference

AAEE Environmental Education Conference

Aboriginal Pedagogies Training

Primary Connections Training

Principal Network Meetings

Milestone planning workshops

Performance and Development training

EZEC Principals Conference

Training of new casuals in all programs

Total Professional Learning Expenditure: \$6,970.20

Financial information

Financial summary

This summary covers funds for operating costs and does not involve expenditure areas such as permanent salaries, building and major maintenance.

A full copy of the school's 2015 financial statement is tabled at the annual general meetings of the School Advisory Council. Further details concerning the statement can be obtained by contacting the school.

Date of financial summary	30/11/2015
Income	\$
Balance brought forward	94,644.96
Global funds	29,081.00
Tied funds	16,178.84
School & community sources	33,726.64
Interest	2,295.44
Trust receipts	0.00
Canteen	0.00
Total income	81,281.92
Expenditure	
Teaching & learning	
Key learning areas	22,549.55
Excursions	0.00
Extracurricular dissections	0.00
Library	161.34
Training & development	390.86
Tied funds	10,605.43
Casual relief teachers	1,209.47
Administration & office	17,650.77
School-operated canteen	0.00
Utilities	8,964.25
Maintenance	3,278.60
Trust accounts	0.00
Capital programs	0.00
Total expenditure	64,810.27
Balance carried forward	111,116.61

School performance

Each year schools are required to seek the opinions of parents, students and teachers about the school. Their responses are presented below.

Teacher satisfaction

2015 teacher evaluation data indicated:

- 95% of visiting teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the teaching strategies and learning activities were relevant varied and helped achieve the programs outcomes.

- 92% of visiting teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the program will be used to introduce or revise a unit of work currently being studied
- 95% of visiting teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the program enhanced their professional learning by providing strategies for integrating the curriculum with environmental / sustainability or outdoor education.
- 95% of visiting teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their EEC teacher was knowledgeable about the topic being studied and interacted well with their students.

Policy requirements

Aboriginal education

Observatory Hill EEC acknowledges the Gadigal Nation as the custodians of the land. Signage identifying Gadigal use of native flora in the area has been installed. Staff have also received training on Aboriginal Pedagogies. OHEEC supports the *EZEC Aboriginal Reconciliation Plan*, whose vision is for all Australians, particularly young Australians, to recognise, understand and be proud of the fact, that Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples, as Australia's first peoples, have strong connections culturally, physically and spiritually to the lands and waters of our nation.

Multicultural Education and Anti-racism

All programs are developed to be suitable for students from various cultural and religious backgrounds.

Other school programs

In addition to the Centre's 24 incursion and excursion programs, OHEEC:

- Worked with the **Greenway Primary Schools Sustainability Program** to support over 750 students from Ashfield, Canterbury, Leichhardt and Marrickville LGA's use the Greenway.
- Lead **Project Flying Fox**, in Centennial Park and Parramatta Park to investigate an iconic threatened species.
- Lead **Grime Scene Investigation**, an event in Botany Bay for 60 students and 10 teachers to celebrate World Environment Day
- Organised **NESTS**, a Network of Environmental and Sustainability Teachers Sydney
- Ran workshops on sustainable housing at the **Youth Eco Summit** for over 200 students.
- Ran workshops for around 100 students at the **Youth Enviro Summit** on school energy efficiency