



Australian Learning Communities Network - Learning Forum:

“Climate Resilience, Sustainability, and Regeneration – Community Education and Action.”

Overview

Date: 24 October 2024

Duration: 1 hour 15 minutes

Key Topics: Education for sustainability, community engagement, climate resilience, and practical projects in UNESCO Learning Cities including Melton (Victoria) and initiatives from South Australia’s Councils and Libraries and University of South Australia.

Presentation Summaries

1. Silvia Velez, Melton City Council

Topic: *The Role of Libraries in Promoting Environmental Literacy – Reflections on the 2024 Melton Learning Festival*

Context: Melton City’s libraries played a key role in community climate education, with a particular emphasis on lifelong and inclusive learning.

Melton Learning Festival (2024): This year's festival emphasised sustainability, environmental awareness, and climate resilience. Themes included waste reduction, cultural understanding, and local biodiversity.

Community Needs Addressed:

- Waste Contamination: Education on sorting recyclables and composting.
- Environmental Literacy: Workshops on practical sustainability actions, such as zero-waste cooking and fast fashion awareness.
- First Nations Knowledge: Activities fostered a deeper understanding of local Indigenous practices and the intersection of sustainability and reconciliation.

Engagement Strategies:

- Emphasis on hope and action to address climate anxiety, particularly among younger participants.
- Activities like “Sketch and Chat,” where participants shared sustainability ideas while being sketched, and an “Eco Passport” for children to engage with environmental booths across the library.
- Results showed high engagement, with approximately 1,700 visitors (up from the previous attendances) on the festival’s opening day.

Outcome: A foundation for ongoing community education, with plans to embed successful festival programs as regular library offerings.

2. Dr. Keri Hopeward, University of South Australia

Topic: *Living Lightly Locally: Smarter and Stronger through Citizen Science*

Program Background:

Living Lightly Locally is a long-term citizen science project promoting sustainable living and resilience in Mount Barker and Burnside, with support for expansion across South Australia and potentially nationwide.

It consists of a free 12-month program with monthly themes (e.g., recycling, sustainable living), envisioning sustainable futures, and setting achievable goals.

Core Program Elements:

- **Visioning Process:** Participants imagine a regenerative, sustainable future for their region. A local artist captures these visions, fostering a sense of shared purpose and hope.
- **Educational Videos and Local Case Studies:** Monthly video topics on sustainability themes feature stories of active participants (or “Living Lightly Legends”) to inspire others.
- **Citizen Science Data Collection:** Participants collect and share data on their own sustainable actions, using tools like self-audits and personal diaries, to inform broader research and policy.

Challenges Addressed:

- **Recruitment Diversity:** Efforts to expand the participant base to more culturally and demographically diverse communities.
- **Systemic Barriers:** Focus on identifying and addressing local challenges (e.g., policy limitations) for sustainable living.
- **Quantitative vs. Qualitative Measurement:** Balancing hard data with personal stories to capture the impact of sustainability efforts accurately.

Impact and Next Steps:

Plans for a more accessible program model and streamlined data collection, with the goal of establishing the program nationally.

3. Benita Parsons, Port Adelaide Enfield Libraries (PAE)

Topic: *Climate Resilience Projects at PAE Libraries – Gen Green and Council Collaborations*

PAE Libraries’ Sustainability Commitment:

Libraries promote climate action and resilience by integrating environmental programs into educational offerings and supporting wider Council sustainability goals.

Key Programs and Activities:

- **Gen Green (Youth STEM Program):** Hands-on activities for ages 12-17 to understand climate science, sustainable development goals, and local/global impacts of climate change. Activities include terrarium-building, energy-saving experiments, and recycling workshops.
- **Tree Canopy and Biodiversity Initiatives:** To combat climate challenges, the Council distributed 300 trees to residents, focusing on areas with low tree coverage, and engaged communities in coastal and mangrove conservation.
- **Sustainable Practices and Education:** Monthly repair cafes, citizen science projects, microclimate monitoring, and “Little Greenies” after-school program for younger children.

Council Collaborations: Includes climate adaptation partnerships with other local councils to promote eco-friendly home practices, develop climate-resilient infrastructure, and support biodiversity through community activities.

Innovative Engagement: Programs like “right to repair” education, observational beehives, and native bee hotels offer practical, local solutions while fostering community ownership in environmental resilience.

Key Takeaways and Overall Themes

1. **Community-Driven Climate Education:** Libraries and education institutions are central to promoting accessible, practical climate education.
2. **Engagement Across Ages and Cultures:** Youth-focused initiatives like Gen Green and diverse festival programming foster an inclusive approach to sustainability.
3. **Long-Term Program Vision:** Programs are designed for longevity, aiming to embed climate resilience education into regular library offerings and expand reach through partnerships.
4. **Collaboration for Broader Impact:** The importance of partnerships, from local councils to community organisations, was emphasised to enhance resources, outreach, and program sustainability.

These presentations underscore the potential of community education in driving sustainable change and inspire ongoing collaboration to advance climate resilience.

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