

Teaching values for life!

A six-part series by David Koutsoukis

3. Be kind to the environment!

Encourage your students to respect and value the environment

'Don't it always seem to go, that you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone.

They paved paradise and put up a parking lot.'

So sang Joni Mitchell in her 1970s hit 'Big yellow taxi'. This song reflects two key points that can help us teach our students to 'be kind to the environment'. Firstly, the song communicates an environmental message. It laments the destruction of vegetation (and, therefore, wildlife) in the wake of progress and urbanisation. It urges us to reflect on our actions in regard to the environment and to consider what the consequences of not doing so may be. This, of course, is the type of attitude that we want to instil in our students.

The second point we can take from this song is that the use of music can be a very effective way of teaching values.

It must be remembered that the teaching of values is quite different from the teaching of other subjects. Most of our subjects deal with factual information such as $1 + 1 = 2$, or that the capital city of New Zealand is Wellington. To achieve success in these subjects, students have to be able to recall information or a formula. However, with values we are talking about changing people's behaviour—and we don't change behaviour by just standing at the front of the classroom and giving out information. To change behaviour, we need to connect with our students by involving their hearts and minds. This may be through the emotional connection we have with them, it may be through the real-life examples and role models we show them, or it may be through the engaging teaching strategies we use.

Key pointers

How to encourage your students to respect and value the environment.

Encourage your students to be aware that we need to:

- 3.1 clean up after ourselves
- 3.2 keep the land, air and waterways clean
- 3.3 recycle what we can and not waste
- 3.4 save water
- 3.5 conserve energy
- 3.6 care for natural habitats, wildlife and endangered species
- 3.7 use environmentally friendly products
- 3.8 consider environmentally friendly energy sources
- 3.9 consider using resources that can be replaced
- 3.10 value our cultural heritage.



Using music

Music is a great tool for engaging students and connecting with their hearts and minds. Most of us have been emotionally affected by music, so it makes sense that music can help us connect content with emotions in order to promote positive behaviour. Some environmentally themed songs that come to mind include 'Big yellow taxi' by Joni Mitchell, 'Blue sky mining' by Midnight Oil and 'Rip rip woodchip' by John Williamson.

There are many ways you can use music to teach values, from playing the song and discussing its themes, to

getting the students to write their own lyrics. I have had a lot of success in the past with getting students to write parodies of existing songs to the theme of whatever topic you are dealing with. A couple of websites that contain environmental songs are www.songsforteaching.com/environmentongs.htm and www.classroomclassics.com/environment.html.

Using the Internet

The Internet, of course, is another great way to engage students in their learning and there are a number of great sites that encourage students to 'be kind to the environment'. Some of them contain lesson plans, others can be used for research assignments, and some even have interactive games. Here is a selection for you to check out:

- www.gould.edu.au Includes teacher resources and school projects, and make sure you check the links to their interactive websites such as www.futurescapes.com.au and www.gould.edu.au/foodwebs.
- www.environment.gov.au A federal government sustainability education website with lots of links to Australian environmental sites. More suited for teacher information.
- www.ecokids.ca A great Canadian website aimed at young kids. Make sure you check out the games and activities.

Real life

Another way to connect with students' hearts and minds is to have them to participate in real-life environmental activities. Teachers have been doing this for years with activities such as recycling programs, clean-up projects and excursions to environmental centres. Why not get your students to do some environmental 'stuff'. Some great places/projects I have seen schools visit or become involved in include:

- recycling centres
- environmental displays
- Adopt a Spot – where a class is allocated one part of the school to keep clean (grounds or gardens)

- raising money for an environmental cause
- national parks and heritage areas
- making something out of recycled materials
- making a reusable shopping bag
- creating signs/posters promoting environmental issues.

Have fun!

I am sure that you are already doing lots of great things to encourage your students to 'be kind to the environment', but I hope this article has given you a few more ideas. Always remember that, by teaching values in your classroom, you are planting seeds for the future that will not only help your students be the best that they can be, but will help create a positive future for all humanity. Never forget the difference that you make!



Ten simple things your students can do to respect and value the environment

Encourage your students to:

1. put away things after they use them
2. turn off lights after they leave a room
3. use the appropriate button in a dual flush toilet
4. reduce the amount of time they spend in the shower
5. put old clothes into recycling bins
6. encourage their parents to use reusable shopping bags
7. put used cool drink containers into recycling bins
8. make a donation for an endangered species cause
9. not leave the tap running while they clean their teeth
10. pick up rubbish, even if they didn't drop it.

Give your children 'Six kinds of best'

This article is the second in a series of six articles based on the 'Six kinds of best' concept. The concept provides a simple framework to help teachers and parents articulate what good values are and gives students signposts to point them in the right direction when they get to 'crossroad' moments in their lives—times when they need to make important decisions. By teaching the 'Six kinds of best' we are giving our children a simple, consistent and meaningful message that helps them remember what they need to do in order to become happy and successful individuals.

The Six kinds of best affirmation



www.sixkindsofbest.com

Seven ways to teach children to 'be kind to the environment'

1. Teach children the 'Six kinds of best' affirmation so they internalise the core values.
2. Articulate what being 'kind to the environment' means. See the key pointers on the opposite page and put up a poster to remind students.
3. Teach lessons on the key pointers from the *Values Education Toolkit* books. Free downloads are available at www.sixkindsofbest.com.
4. Use 'Six kinds of best' language. For example, if someone is cleaning up after themselves say, 'Well done, Ava, that's being kind to the environment'. Or if they drop some rubbish say, 'Oscar, that's not being kind to the environment, is it?'
5. Catch children being kind to the environment. Give them an 'I am kind to the environment' sticker or certificate. Better still, get children to praise each other when they see examples of other children being kind to the environment.
6. Use an individual or class progress chart to reinforce positive examples of environmental awareness.
7. Create a 'Be kind to the environment' class display.

For more information on the 'Six kinds of best' Values education toolkit resources visit www.sixkindsofbest.com.