St. Elizabeth’s Parish School Dandenong North

Studies of Society and the Environment Policy

Rationale

Studies of Society and the Environment provide opportunities for children to develop and apply understandings about communities, cultures and environments. By learning about the environment and the interaction of people with it, children gain appreciation of ecological sustainability and are able to discuss issues, make decisions and work cooperatively with others to solve problems. Students are able to make connections between areas of learning when the SOSE program is integrated into the curriculum using the inquiry approach. It promotes attitudes and values that encourage confidence, independence, critical thinking, responsibility and becoming active and informed citizens in a democratic Australian society.

The concepts and understandings that underpin SOSE are history, geography, ecology, sociology and economics. Within these areas children will develop skills to enable them to confidently:

- Identify, collect and process data from a range of sources, including electronic media.
- Use the inquiry process to plan an investigation, analyse data, and form conclusions supported by evidence and plan for action.
- Reason and solve problems to assist them in making meaning of their society and environment.
- Clarify values and attitudes about issues affecting society and the environment, in particular tolerance of people from many cultures and commitment to the democratic process.
- Participate in activities that enhance community life, particularly in making decisions about civic projects and in ways of achieving ecologically sustainable development.
- Use information technology to support learning about society and environment and in investigating and communicating ideas.
- To be able to think through consequences from the point of view of society as a means of making each student a more responsible citizen of the future.
- To be realistic about what individuals and groups in society can achieve through formal and informal channels.
- Have the skills and confidence to be able to locate via the internet, appropriate agencies pertinent to set topics.
- Have a sense of responsibility for the environment, and an awareness of the impact of their life styles - and those of others - upon it.
- Have a sense of social justice.

Specific Aims

To develop in the children the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to the pursuit of the Studies of Society and The Environment.

Knowledge

Children to learn about the social, physical and cultural environment of Australia and the world.

Their behaviour and social organisation is fostered by:

- social, cultural and civic studies
- human interaction with the environment
- values and beliefs
- self-concept and personal development activities
- daily life skills
- science, technology and society studies.
Skills
The ability to process and apply information is required for and contributes to, the inquiry process.

Research Skills for gathering and processing data.
- Identifying and clarifying issues.
- Gathering and organising data.
- Interpreting data.
- Analysing data.
- Evaluating evidence.

Thinking Skills - distinguishing between critical thinking skills (seeing things clearly) and creative thinking skills (seeing things creatively).
- Critically examining and evaluating the data.
- Planning.
- Establishing cause and effect.
- Predicting outcomes.
- Suggesting consequences.
- Brainstorming.
- Speculating about the future.
- Suggesting alternative solutions.
- Viewing from different perspectives.

Social Participation Skills - Students need to learn how to relate to and co-operate with other people.
- Identifying the consequence of one’s actions and the effects of one’s words on others.
- Showing courtesy and concern for others.
- Sharing tasks and working constructively with others.
- Functioning as an effective member of a group.
- Adopting a variety of group roles.
- Accepting criticism and advice.
- Matching people and tasks to be completed.

Communication Skills - The need to express understandings and feelings clearly, effectively and creatively. Encouragement to express ideas in all forms:
- written
- spoken
- films
- drama
- videos
- art
- display
- photography
- graph
- maps

Attitudes and Values
Providing opportunities for children to analyse, question and to develop their attitudes and values as developed within an atmosphere permeated by the Christian values of open mindedness, self-acceptance and responsibility as:
- an individual
- members of a group
- members of society
- members of the world community
Students’ learning outcomes for S.O.S.E. are formulated within a yearly planning process. This process is a review of the previous year’s work in the area of S.O.S.E. Once this evaluation has occurred, staff formulate in accordance with school policies, student needs, Victorian Essential Learning Standards and other resources, sequential learning outcomes. These are documented yearly in the Unit of Inquiry for each year level. These learning outcomes form the basis of what is to be taught throughout the Unit of Inquiry. Staff then work together to plan activities and to work out how best to teach these learning outcomes so that they are achievable for each student.

At St. Elizabeth’s Parish School we assess through goal based activities, which increases students’ independence in learning. Teacher observations are made and testing is done in order to give diagnostic information about students at a given time. Apart from testing the knowledge component assessment is made to monitor skills such as identifying an issue, gathering data, using research techniques and interpreting information.

We record this assessment through anecdotal records, checklists and student files. Samples of completed students’ work are also kept and duplicate copies of comments or certificates, which are given for project work are made and kept.

Opportunities for Studies of Society and the Environment are integrated into the appropriate Inquiry Units.