



Overview

This article recounts how students from Raumati South School, an Enviroschool, entered an environmentally sustainable garden in the Ellerslie International Flower Show in Christchurch and won two prizes! As well as capturing the effort and excitement of the project, the article describes the planning process and how the students applied their developing knowledge about caring for the environment to the design of the garden.

The range and depth of concepts and information in this text mean that you may want to revisit it several times for different purposes. The text requires students to “confidently use a range of processing and comprehension strategies to make meaning from and think critically about” text (from *The Literacy Learning Progressions*, page 14).

There is a PDF of the text and an audio version as an MP3 file at www.juniorjournal.tki.org.nz

Related texts

Texts about recycling and sustainability; *Extraordinary Earthworms* (Ready to Read, Gold); “Make a Mini Worm Farm” (JJ 39); “Our Recycled Worm Farm” (JJ 40); “Making Paper” (JJ 44)

Texts about students carrying out school-based projects: “Our Recycled Worm Farm” (JJ 40); “A New Home for Mokomoko” (JJ 43); “Making Paper” (JJ 44)

Text characteristics

Key text characteristics relating to the reading standard for after three years at school are shown in the boxes that have a solid outline.

Visual language features (subheadings, text boxes, words in bold print to indicate a definition or explanation close by, a labelled plan, a map, a caption, and photographs) that provide further information and help students navigate the text

Shifts in time and place that require the students to keep track of events



Our Gifted Garden

by Bernadette Wilson

Does your school have a garden? Our school does. In fact, our school entered a garden in the Ellerslie International Flower Show!



Ideas and information organised in paragraphs

A variety of sentence structures, including complex sentences

Like lots of New Zealand schools, Raumati South School is an **Enviroschool**. Students in Enviroschools learn how to grow healthy plants and how to protect the environment for the future. Our school garden has won lots of awards for being **sustainable**. (That means the garden grows plants without harming the environment or using too much water or taking the goodness out of the soil.)

The Ellerslie International Flower Show began in Auckland in 1994, but it now takes place in Christchurch. Each year, garden designers set up their garden displays and thousands of people come to see them. There are prizes for the best gardens.

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Planning the garden

The students and teachers who plant and care for the garden are called the Go Green team. The flower show was going to be held in March, so we had six months to plan and prepare our garden. We wanted to make it really special. Mr Stewart and Mrs Turner helped us to design it. (They organise our Go Green team.)

The rules said that the garden had to be 6 metres long and 6 metres wide. We wanted to have vegetables, herbs, and fruit as well as other plants. We also wanted some New Zealand native plants so that we could have lizards and wētā. Every class came up with ideas for things they wanted to see.

Then we drew a plan of the garden.

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A mix of explicit and implicit content within the text and illustrations that encourages the students to make connections between ideas in the text and their prior knowledge to make inferences, for example, about the links between the ideas of “design” and drawing a plan and about what makes this garden “sustainable”

Some unfamiliar words and phrases, the meanings of which are supported by the context, illustrations, and layout, including subject-specific vocabulary (in bold print) and commonly used words that have multiple meanings

English (Reading)

Level 2 – Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

Level 2 – Language features: Show some understanding of how language features are used for effect within and across texts.

Science

Level 2 – Interacting systems: Describe how natural features are changed and resources are affected by natural events and human actions.

Technology

Level 2 – Planning for practice: Develop a plan that identifies the key stages and resources required to complete an outcome.

Select from and adapt the suggestions below according to your students' strengths, needs, and experiences – their culture, language, and identity (*The New Zealand Reading and Writing Standards for Years 1–8*, Knowledge of the Learner, page 6).

Possible reading purposes

(What can the students expect to find out or think about as a result of reading this text?)

- To find out what makes this garden special

For a subsequent reading:

- To think about what makes this garden sustainable

Possible learning goals

(What opportunities does this text provide for the students to learn more about how to “read, respond to, and think critically” about texts?)

- **The students** make connections between the text and the visual language features in order to **identify** what the Go Green team needed to do.
- They **ask questions** about aspects they are not sure of or want to know more about and attempt to **find answers**.
- They look for and **identify** information about how the Go Green team made the garden sustainable.
- They **monitor** their reading and take action (for example, rereading a sentence or looking for clues close to the word) to clarify the meaning of unfamiliar words.

**Text and language features****Vocabulary**

- Subject-specific words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to the students: “Enviroschool”, “sustainable”, “Go Green”, “waterwheel”, “generate”, “pumice”, “cement”, “compost”, “inter-island ferry”
- The names: “Ellerslie”, “Raumati”, “Kāpiti Coast”, “Kieran Read”, “Wharenui”
- Commonly used words that have more than one meaning, including words that can be used as nouns or verbs, for example, “Gifted”, “entered”, “Show”, “plant”, “Green”, “plan”, “beds”, “turns”/“turn”

Possible supporting strategies

(These suggestions may be used before, during, or after reading in response to the students' needs.)

Before reading, either during the introduction to the text or in a preparatory task the day before, activate or build the students' knowledge of the topic and the subject-specific vocabulary. For example, prepare a task that requires the students to work in pairs, discussing and matching vocabulary with definitions that you have provided. For more ideas on supporting vocabulary, see [ESOL Online: Vocabulary](#) (and see Specific knowledge below).

Support the students' **word-solving** attempts by prompting them to remember the strategies they know they can use, often in combination, for example:

- when **decoding**:
 - breaking words into syllables (“gen-er-ate”, “or-gan-ise”, “Kā-pi-ti”)
 - looking for known words or familiar chunks, including prefixes and suffixes, within words (“Enviro-school”, “inter-national”, “sus-tain-able”, “design-ers”, “inter-island”, “Whare-nui”, “re-build”)
- when working out **the meaning of unfamiliar or confusing words and phrases**:
 - using the context and looking for key words and phrases that are close by
 - noting the use of bold print for some words and by looking for an explanation or definition close by, for example, within brackets, a text box, or in an illustration or diagram

Have a dictionary available for the students to confirm or clarify meanings, but remind them that they can make a best attempt at a word's meaning and come back to it later. Have bilingual dictionaries available, where appropriate.

Text features

Visual language features

Briefly review with the students the visual language features. Draw particular attention to the connection between the garden plan and the explanatory text boxes (on pages 20–21).

Specific knowledge

- Concepts of sustainability and protecting the environment
- Knowledge of plants
- Knowledge of places in New Zealand

Support the students to make connections to the concept of sustainability by having them share what they know about caring for the environment and environmental practices they are familiar with at home and school.

Support new knowledge and concepts by planning introductory activities a few days before reading the text. For example:

- exploring the school gardens and discussing what is planted (including native plants) and what those plants need to grow
- using the map on page 22 to introduce Raumati South School and its location in relation to your school.

**Metacognition****HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR STUDENTS TO BE METACOGNITIVE**

Here are some ways you can build your students' awareness of the processes and strategies they are using as they make meaning and think critically. Examples of metacognitive behaviours are threaded through the notes and indicated by **M**.

M How did the bold print help you?

M Think about what you did to work out the meaning of that word.

Introducing the text

- Use your knowledge of your students to ensure that your introduction to the text is effective in activating their prior knowledge and providing appropriate support for a successful first reading. For example, if the vocabulary or ideas about sustainability are likely to be new to the students, arrange a pre-reading task to take place a day or two before the reading to build their understanding (see “Text and language features” above).
- Ask the students to read the title and briefly share their ideas about what a “Gifted Garden” might be. Then have them read page 18 to find out more about the garden.
- Support them to identify the two main ideas here: the school entered their garden in a flower show, and the garden was sustainable. Allow time for the students to discuss what they know about sustainability (or being “green”) and gardening.
- Direct the students’ attention to the sentence in brackets to clarify their understanding of a “sustainable” garden. Have the students briefly look through the article to note the visual language features (see “Text features” above).
- Share the reading purpose and learning goal(s).
- You could provide the students with small sticky notes to mark things they are not sure about or that they would like to find out more about (ask questions).

Reading and discussing the text

Suggestions for ways that you can support the students to achieve the learning goals are listed in the right-hand column of the table below. **Select from and adapt** the suggestions according to your students’ needs. These suggestions may apply to the first or a subsequent reading of the text. Let the students read the whole text by themselves, intervening only if it’s clear that a student needs help. There will be many opportunities to provide support with word solving and deeper comprehension on subsequent readings.

Student behaviours

Examples of what to look for and support as the students work towards achieving their learning goal(s). Much of the processing that students do at this level is “inside their heads” and may not be obvious until after they have read the text and you are discussing it as a group.

The first reading

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The students check or confirm the meaning of subject-specific vocabulary. They use sticky notes to mark things they have questions about, for example, what herbs are. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remind the students of strategies they can use when reading this text. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• They make connections between the description of the garden on page 19 and their prior knowledge to visualise its size and what it might contain. They infer that lizards and wētā like native plants. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prompt the students to visualise the garden to help them see why the Go Green team might have wanted help with ideas. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• As they read, the students track the shifts in time, for example, realising that this garden was started in one year and completed in the next.• The students draw on the gardening ideas listed on page 19 and the labelled diagram on pages 20–21 to help them understand Raumati South School’s garden plan. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage the students to take their time exploring the multiple forms of information on pages 19 through to 21. Prompt them to make connections to their own experiences and prior knowledge. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• They make connections to their own experiences, for example, to infer why the artwork is included and to visualise how hard the students must have worked and some of the challenges they may have faced, for example, looking after the garden in the holidays when different members of the Go Green team would be away.• As they read about the awards and visitors’ responses on pages 22–24, they infer that the parents are proud of the Go Green team’s hard work. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draw their attention to the significance of the awards by thinking aloud: <i>I wonder why their parents are so proud of them?</i> |

Discussing the text after the first or a subsequent reading

- The students look for information about times and tasks in the text to remind them of the sequence that the Go Green team needed to follow.
- The students form and justify reasons for why this garden is special (for example, it involved a lot of people working together for a long time; it got moved twice; it helped the visitors learn about caring for the environment).
- The students reread the text to identify information about what makes this garden sustainable. For example, the Go Green team used recycled and found materials within the garden; the keyhole garden recycles food scraps so it creates compost and uses less water; and they generated power by using the bike.
- The students identify aspects of the text that they are not sure of or would like to investigate further.
- Ask the students to identify and summarise what the Go Green team had to do to prepare their garden and get it to the show. Record their ideas on a chart that students can refer to later.
- Remind the students of the reading purpose and ask them to share their opinions and ideas about what made the garden so special, using evidence from the text.
- Have the students reread the definition of sustainable on page 18. Ask them to find information in the text about how the Go Green team made the garden sustainable.
- Record their discoveries on a chart that can be referred to or added to later. Prompt them to make connections to what they already know about sustainability, including information from the related texts listed in these notes.
- Ask the students about their questions. Either support them to go back to the text to find answers (if the answers are in the text) or record the questions for further investigation.

Supporting metacognition

With support, the students reflect on their learning. They revisit the reading purpose and learning goal(s).

☑ The students identify some challenges in the text and explain how they worked them out (or tried to work them out).

☑ The students reflect on the purpose and use of information to answer a specific question, for example, to find out how the garden saved water.

Remind the students of the reading purpose and learning goal(s).

☑ Ask questions: *I noticed you took away one of your sticky notes. What new information did you find that helped you?*

☑ *What key words did you look for? What helped you decide if the information was useful in answering your question?*

After reading

- The students can reread the article as they listen to the audio version. Audio versions also provide English language learners with good models of pronunciation, intonation, and expression.
- Provide further opportunities for the students to reread this article as well as other texts related to protecting the environment, sustainability, recycling, and/or gardening (see Related texts above).
- Provide a copy of the unanswered or partly answered questions from the earlier reading. The students can work through these questions as they reread the text or read other informational texts and online sites. For example:

Questions	Answers	What else do we want to know?	Answers
Who can enter the Ellerslie Flower Show?	Not just kids. Anyone from any country.	Are there rules about entering or can you just enter?	You have to get permission from the organisers, so your ideas have to be good.
What is compost?	A mix of vegetable and fruit scraps.	What makes the scraps into compost?	Why is compost important in a sustainable garden?

- To provide practice in gathering information across a text, have the students refer to the questions and answers chart above and the text to choose and write about a sequence of four important things that the Go Green team did.
- The students could work in pairs to plan a small garden or design a new and sustainable feature for an existing garden, adding labels and explanations, then presenting their ideas to the class.
- Reinforce new vocabulary by having the students work in pairs to create their own glossary of subject-specific words they have identified in this or a related reading.
- Provide “stretch” for students by having them work in pairs to make inferences about the sorts of questions the judges asked and how the Go Green team might have answered such questions.