Everyone can have a say: Local decision making

Strand
Time, Continuity and Change
Place and Space
Systems, Resources and Power

Core learning outcomes

Time, Continuity and Change	**TCC 3.3**	Students use knowledge of people's contributions in Australia's past to cooperatively develop visions of preferred futures.
Place and Space	**PS 3.2**	Students create and undertake plans that aim to influence decisions about an element of a place.
	PS 3.3	Students cooperatively collect and analyse data obtained through field study instruments and surveys, to influence the care of a local place.
	PS 3.5	Students describe the values underlying personal and other people's actions regarding familiar places.
Systems, Resources and Power	**SRP 3.3**	Students apply the principles of democratic decision making in cooperative projects.

Purpose and overview

Activities assist students to participate as members of an environmental project group in an investigation into an environmental issue.

Students consider how to improve environments in their local area. They explore people's contributions to solving environmental problems and the values underlying their actions.

Students decide how their project group may influence the care of a local place by using instruments, data collection methods and sources of information to conduct field studies.

Participation in a negotiated and collaborative class environmental project assists students to apply principles of democratic decision making such as consensus, representativeness and accountability.

Phases	Activities	Core learning outcomes	Assessment opportunities
1. Identify an environmental project for a familiar place	Students form an environmental project group to decide collaboratively on an environmental issue to investigate.	TCC 3.3 PS 3.2 PS 3.5 SRP 3.3	Activities in Phase 1 may provide opportunities to gather evidence of students' demonstrations of PS 3.2 as they begin to plan their environmental project. Opportunities to gather evidence of students' demonstrations of SRP 3.3 may be provided as students begin applying principles of democratic decision making as members of an environmental project group. Opportunities to gather evidence of students' demonstrations of TCC 3.3 may be provided as students research the contributions others have made to an environmental issue and develop probable and preferred futures for their identified environmental issue. Opportunities to gather evidence of students' demonstrations of PS 3.5 may be provided as students describe the values that underlie other people's actions regarding familiar places and environmental issues.
2. Develop and enact a plan to care for a familiar place	Students collaborate to develop a plan for their identified environmental issue. Students work in their committees within the environmental project group and apply the principles of democratic decision making to achieve the goals of their plan to care for a familiar place.	PS 3.2 PS 3.3 SRP 3.3	Activities in Phase 2 may provide opportunities to gather evidence of students' demonstrations of PS 3.2 as they engage in creative and strategic processes such as brainstorming options, developing plans, considering the possible consequences of plans, implementing plans and evaluating the effectiveness of tasks. Opportunities to gather evidence of students' demonstrations of SRP 3.3 may be provided as students apply principles of democratic decision making. Opportunities to gather evidence of students' demonstrations of PS 3.3 may be provided as students cooperatively collect and analyse field study data about an environmental issue in the local area.
3. Evaluate action and consider future directions	Students reflect on and evaluate the processes and stages in their environmental project. Findings are presented in negotiated formats to appropriate public forums. Using information gathered about contributions people have made to a similar environmental issue, students reflect on actions that could aid their environmental issue.	TCC 3.3 PS 3.2 PS 3.5 SRP 3.3	Students evaluate the effectiveness of their plans as possible evidence of demonstrations of PS 3.2. Students describe the values that underlie their personal actions regarding familiar places and this environmental issue as possible evidence of demonstrations of PS 3.5. Students apply the principles of democratic decision making as possible evidence of demonstrations of SRP 3.3. Students use knowledge to cooperatively develop visions of preferred futures for an environmental issue as possible evidence of demonstrations of TCC 3.3.

Assessment

The assessment opportunities outlined are examples of how to assess students' demonstrations of the identified learning outcomes. As often as possible, negotiate assessment with students and support a variety of ways of demonstrating the learning outcomes. Reflect with students on evidence gathered when making judgments about their demonstrations of learning outcomes. Some students may require more time and/or other contexts in which to demonstrate these learning outcomes. Other modules may provide such time and/or contexts and the 'Levels 1 to 6 module learning outcomes maps' in the *Years 1 to 10 Studies of Society and Environment Sourcebook Guidelines* can be used to identify these modules.

Assessing learning outcomes at different levels

Activities in this module are designed primarily for students working towards demonstrations of Level 3 learning outcomes. Assessment opportunities may need to be modified or created to enable students to demonstrate core learning outcomes before and after this level.

Using this module

Discovering Democracy

The activities are designed to assist students to develop the knowledge, skills and values needed by effective citizens. Support materials in the *Discovering Democracy Primary Kit* are useful resources for activities. Activities develop understandings of the types, structures and functions of groups in communities, how and why people participate in groups and how active participation in project planning and decision making is organised.

The 'Joining In' section and relevant handouts from *Discovering Democracy Middle Primary Units* from the *Discovering Democracy Primary Kit* will be useful (see 'Support materials and references').

Action research model

Activities use a modified action research inquiry model. For further information about this inquiry model, consult *Inquiry Approaches in Primary Studies of Society and Environment Key Learning Area*, which is available on the Queensland School Curriculum Council website.

Field study focuses

A variety of contexts and/or issues may be selected for investigation. In negotiation with students and using democratic decision-making processes (see the SRP 3.3 elaborations in the sourcebook guidelines), decide on a relevant community focus such as:
– land clearing for development
– pollution
– overfishing
– establishing and maintaining protected natural habitats for species of plants and/or native animals
– enhancing awareness of and raising funds for endangered animal species
– maintaining a community area such as a local park, nature reserve, catchment area, sports facility, school arboretum, playground or vegetable garden
– maintaining a local site such as a war memorial or wall mural that depicts cultural heritages
– participating in an environmental campaign such as Clean Up Australia, Keep Australia Beautiful, Landcare or the Tidy Schools Competition.

Environmental audit

Consider conducting an audit (on a school/community) as the first step in developing and implementing an Environmental Management Plan or Cleaner Production Plan. An audit will provide a baseline against which improvements in environmental management can be measured. Environmental Management Plans need to be regularly evaluated and updated (see 'Environmental audit' resources in 'Support materials and references').

Support materials and references

Background information

Terminology

In this module students have opportunities to become familiar with and use the following terminology:

action	democracy	relationship
audit	environment	resource
behaviour	goals	respect
citizenship	group	responsibility
civil rights	human rights	reward
community	individual	rights
conflict	informed	roles
conservation	management	values
decision making	meditation	

School authority policies

Be aware of and observe school authority policies that may be relevant to this module. Refer to the websites of the following school systems for information about environmental policies, programs and practices:
− The Association of Independent Schools of Queensland: www.aisq.qld.edu.au/schools/schools.htm
− Education Queensland: http://education.qld.gov.au/
− Queensland Catholic Education Commission: www.qcec.qld.catholic.edu.au/www.index.cfm

Equity considerations

Activities take place in a supportive environment. They provide opportunities for students to increase their understanding and appreciation of equity through valuing diversity and challenging inequities. Activities encourage students to:
− recognise and value the variety of contributions people have made to the environment
− recognise and value the variety of contributions students and their families might have made to the local environment
− respect and value the contributions made by community environmental groups
− promote understanding of the functions and goals of community groups and their contributions to environmental and other issues
− identify, respect and value a wide range of roles and activities undertaken by various community groups and their members.

Some students with disabilities may need assistance with some activities. Advice should be sought from their support teachers.

It is important that these equity considerations inform decision making about teaching strategies, classroom organisation and assessment.

Links

Studies of Society and Environment

This module is one of a suite of modules for Levels 1 to 6. See the Queensland School Curriculum Council's website at www.qscc.qld.edu.au for more information.

This module has conceptual and process links to the following modules:
− Level 1: *Lean, green cleaning machine: Caring for the environment*
− Level 2: *Creating tomorrow's world today: Present and future environments*
− Level 2: *Eco-consumerism: Conserving the environment*
− Level 3: *Belonging: Group belonging and perceptions*
− Level 4: *Active citizens, Australian governments: Australia's democracy*.

Other key learning areas

Activities may offer opportunities for planning across key learning areas. However, it is important that the integrity of the key concepts, organising ideas and processes within key learning areas is maintained.

Possible links to *Health and Physical Education* include:
– PHIC 3.5 Students describe features of places where they live, work and play that influence the health of themselves and others, and propose ways they can help the people who are responsible for keeping these places healthy.
– EPD 3.4 Students demonstrate communication, cooperation and decision-making skills to collaborate in social, team or group situations.

Possible links to *Science* include:
– LL 3.1 Students draw conclusions about the relationship between features of living things and the environments in which they live.
– LL 3.2 Students present information which illustrates stages in different types of life cycles (including metamorphosis) of familiar living things.
– LL 3.3 Students describe some interactions (including feeding relationships) between living things and between living and non-living parts of the environment.

Evaluation of a unit of work

After completion of units of work developed from this module, collect information and make judgments about:
– teaching strategies and activities used to progress student learning towards demonstrations of core learning outcomes
– opportunities provided to gather evidence about students' demonstrations of core learning outcomes
– future learning opportunities for students who have not yet demonstrated the core learning outcomes and to challenge and extend those students who have already demonstrated the core learning outcomes
– the extent to which activities matched needs of particular groups of students and reflected equity considerations
– the appropriateness of time allocations for particular activities
– the appropriateness of resources used.

Information from this evaluation process can be used to plan subsequent units of work so that they build on, and support, student learning. The evaluated units of work may also be adapted prior to their reuse. For further information, refer to the 'Curriculum evaluation' section in the sourcebook guidelines.

Activities

| Phase 1 | **Identify an environmental project for a familiar place** |

Core learning outcomes emphasis: TCC 3.3, PS 3.2, PS 3.5, SRP 3.3

Students form an environmental project group to decide collaboratively on an environmental issue to investigate.

Activity 1   Forming an environmental project group

Explain to students that they are to form an environmental project group to investigate an environmental issue in the local area.

Assist groups of students to research how local community groups function. If possible, invite members of community groups to speak with students about the structure and activities of their groups.

Discuss and list how a project group might work together to identify and investigate an issue affecting the environment in the local area, and develop an action plan to care for the familiar place. Discuss how members of a project group work together, have common group goals, plan together, organise activities, make decisions and have roles, rights and responsibilities.

Support materials and references

Assist students to form their environmental project group and to use democratic decision-making processes to form committees, select committee members and assign roles, rights and responsibilities. (Refer to the section 'Joining In' in *Discovering Democracy Middle Primary Units* for information about committees, making decisions and holding meetings.)

Resource 1

Discuss with students the use of a constitution that will guide the group's operation (see *Discovering Democracy Middle Primary Units*: Joining In — Developing a Constitution). Aspects of this constitution may include committee structures, functions and processes for the project group. In collaboration with students, create a constitution for the group and display it for all members to view and discuss.

Activity 2   Identifying an issue

Assist students to organise and hold their first meeting of the environmental project group. During this meeting, encourage students to identify local environmental issues — for example, land clearing, pollution of local waterways, and establishing and maintaining protected, natural habitats for species of plants and/or native animals.

Assist the project group to use democratic decision-making processes such as meeting procedures and voting to decide collaboratively on the environmental issue that they will investigate.

Once an issue has been selected, provide opportunities for students in their committees to begin to research this environmental issue. Discuss the findings and assist students to draft a proposal for the environmental project and a letter seeking approval for the project to proceed.

Discuss the protocols that should be observed when obtaining approval for this project — for example, state/local government or council regulations or by-laws may need to be considered and approvals be sought. Brainstorm and list school/community members who may need to be consulted about the project and those who may be able to provide assistance.

Activity 3   Contributing to the environmental issue

Teaching considerations
Ensure students understand the terms 'probable futures' and 'preferred futures'. Refer to
A Futures Perspective: Position Paper available on the Queensland School Curriculum Council
website.

Assist students in their committees to use a variety of sources to research local, state
or national identities who have made contributions to environmental issues similar to
the one they have chosen. Discuss these contributions. Ask students to describe the
values underlying the actions of these people, such as regard for the heritage of the
natural environment or concern for ecological issues, including saving endangered
species from extinction. Discuss with students the contributions they plan to make to
their environmental issue. Use these discussions to assist students to develop possible,
probable and preferred futures for their identified environmental issue.

Assist students to develop posters or other presentations to represent the
environmental issue they have chosen to investigate. Such presentations should
illustrate the preferred future that students envisage for this environmental issue.

Assessment   Activities in Phase 1 may provide opportunities to gather evidence of students'
demonstrations of:
– PS 3.2 as students begin to plan their environmental project
– SRP 3.3 as students begin applying principles of democratic decision making as
  members of an environmental project group
– TCC 3.3 as students research the contributions others have made to an
  environmental issue and develop probable and preferred futures for their identified
  environmental issue
– PS 3.5 as students describe the values that underlie other people's actions regarding
  familiar places and environmental issues.

Phase 2   Develop and enact a plan to care for a familiar place

Core learning outcomes emphasis: PS 3.2, PS 3.3, SRP 3.3

Students collaborate to develop a plan for their identified environmental issue. Students
work in their committees within the environmental project group and apply the principles
of democratic decision making to achieve the goals of their plan to care for a familiar
place.

Activity 4   Conducting an environmental audit

*Support
materials and
references*   Discuss ways of collecting information about the environmental issue in the students'
local area. Explain the processes involved in conducting an environmental audit. This
may involve conducting surveys, and recording observations and data about plant and
animal species or about resource use such as water and electricity. (See 'Support
materials and references' for further details about conducting environmental audits.)

Assist students to conduct an audit and present their findings.

Activity 5   Planning action to care for a familiar place

Assist students to hold a project group meeting at which they present and discuss all
the information and findings they have collected so far. Ask students to identify what
other data they may need to consider when developing an action plan. Brainstorm and
list field study instruments and surveys that could be used to collect this information
(see the PS 3.3 elaborations in the sourcebook guidelines). Assist students to gather
the data.

Once data has been gathered, assist students to analyse the findings. Synthesise
findings with students by focusing on the causes of the issue (who, what and how).
Discuss the fact that there is rarely a direct cause–effect relationship and that many
factors are involved and have to be considered. Outline what future actions could be
included in their plan.

Assist students to identify what tasks will need to be undertaken to achieve these actions. Ask students to nominate tasks and indicate their associated roles and responsibilities.

Resource 2

Using what, who, how, where and when questions, assist students to work together to write an action plan that describes the activities that will be undertaken and the roles and responsibilities of group members (see Resource 2). The plan should detail the actions that are required to achieve the students' preferred future. Consider and discuss the consequences of their proposed actions.

Assist students to record the proceedings of this meeting and to use democratic decision-making processes to develop and agree to a plan of action.

Activity 6   Implementing the action plan

Assist students to begin to implement their plan.

Discuss ways to track and report on the progress of the environmental project. Students' suggestions may include recording reflections in a diary/journal or learning log and/or creating wall chart timelines of activities. Such a timeline may assist students to organise activities sequentially and may suggest future actions not yet considered. Discuss how field study instruments and surveys could be used to gather evidence of the impact actions have had on an environmental issue.

Assist students to hold regular project group meetings to review and consult on the progress of action plans and encourage them to consider feedback from committees and/or group members. Minutes of meetings may be taken to assist in the review and possible modification of the project.

Resource 3

Support materials and references

Resource 3 may be used to assist students to reflect on their progress as they implement their action plan. Before introducing Resource 3, ensure students have prior knowledge and experience of Edward de Bono's creative thinking strategy, 'Six Thinking Hats'.

Assessment

Activities in Phase 2 may provide opportunities to gather evidence of students' demonstrations of:
- PS 3.2 as students engage in creative and strategic processes such as brainstorming options, developing plans, considering the possible consequences of plans, implementing plans and evaluating the effectiveness of tasks
- SRP 3.3 as students apply principles of democratic decision making
- PS 3.3 as students cooperatively collect and analyse field study data about an environmental issue in the local area.

Phase 3   Evaluate action and consider future directions

Core learning outcomes emphasis: TCC 3.3, PS 3.2, PS 3.5, SRP 3.3

Students reflect on and evaluate the processes and stages in their environmental project. Findings are presented in negotiated formats to appropriate public forums. Using information gathered about contributions people have made to a similar environmental issue, students reflect on actions that could aid their environmental issue.

Activity 7   Evaluating action

Assist students to organise a project group meeting to reflect on their achievements. Consider aspects of the environmental project such as purposes, functions, goals, actions and obstacles encountered. Assist students to record this information as a project report.

Assessment

Students evaluate the effectiveness of their plans as possible evidence of demonstrations of PS 3.2.

Activity 8　　　Presenting our environmental project report

Assist students to use democratic decision-making processes to select ways of presenting their environmental project report to interested parties, such as school and/or local community groups. Presentation formats may include:

– inviting local media to report on the project
– writing letters and/or media releases about the project for local media
– providing information about the project to relevant environmental organisations via email
– compiling and presenting reports to school and community forums
– preparing and presenting information about the project on a school/community web page.

Encourage students in their presentations to reflect on and share the values that underlie their personal actions regarding familiar places and this environmental issue.

If the environmental project group agrees, store all relevant documents, such as letters, reports and evaluation records, for future use by other classes, schools, communities or environmental organisations.

Assessment　　Students describe the values that underlie their personal actions regarding familiar places and this environmental issue as possible evidence of demonstrations of PS 3.5.

Students apply the principles of democratic decision making as possible evidence of demonstrations of SRP 3.3.

Activity 9　　　Future directions

Using information about campaigns, people or organisations that have made contributions to a similar environmental issue, ask groups of students to reflect on actions that they believe may help with their environmental issue. Encourage students to present creatively their ideas for future action in a variety of formats, such as models or advertising campaigns that use songs or drama to portray possible, probable and preferred scenarios for this environmental issue.

Assessment　　Students use knowledge cooperatively to develop visions of preferred futures for an environmental issue as possible evidence of demonstrations of TCC 3.3.

A sample constitution

The **name** of our group is _____

The **purposes** of our group are:

    1. _____

    2. _____

    3. _____

    4. _____

    5. _____

The group's organising committee will be elected by ballot. Executive committee members will include Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer (depending on the purposes of group). It is expected that each group member will be present for all meetings and will have equal voting rights at these meetings. The following group members have been elected as executive committee members:

- Chairperson _____
- Secretary _____
- Treasurer _____

Meetings will be held on the _____ of the month at _____ in our classroom and will usually last for ___ minutes. The agenda (prepared by the Secretary) will be posted on the class bulletin board one week before the meeting for members to view. If you have any other items to add, please see the Secretary during this week.

The key **decision-making process** will be voting. This may be done by show of hands or 'secret ballot' where responses are written on slips of paper.

A **budget report** may be presented at a meeting, depending on the purposes and activities of the group.

Depending on the length of operation of the group, this constitution may be reviewed and changed.

I agree that this is an accurate record of our group's constitution.

Date: _____

Signed by group member _____

A sample action plan   Resource 2

What is the task/ activity?	Who will do it? (consider rights and responsibilities)	How will this task be done? (consider strategies, contact people)	Where will this task take place?	When will this task need to be done by?	Has the task/ activity been evaluated? If not, when will this be done?

Evaluating tasks in our action plan	**Resource 3**

Action _____

WHITE HAT — What do we now **know** about the issue after carrying out this action?

_____

_____

YELLOW HAT — What aspects of this action **positively** affected this issue? Why?

_____

_____

BLACK HAT — What aspects of this action **negatively** affected this issue? Why?

_____

_____

RED HAT — How do I (we) **feel** about the action taken?

_____

_____

GREEN HAT — What are some **new or creative ideas** from this activity that may assist future actions?

_____

_____

BLUE HAT — How will we **go about this future action**? What changes do we need to make to our proposal or project goals?

_____

_____

_____

Support materials and references

Australian Government Printing Service, 1994, *The Energy Audit: National Energy Conservation Program*, 2nd edn, AGPS, Canberra.

Australian Association for Environmental Education Inc. 1996, *Eco School, An ESD Approach: A Curriculum and Lifestyle Guide for Australian Schools*, AAEE, Adelaide.

Australian Association for Environmental Education Inc.1996, *Energy in Profile: A Curriculum Approach for Australian Schools, Bands A,B,C*, AAEE, Adelaide.

Burton, A.M. & Sultman, W.F. 1993, *Building Personal Effectiveness*, Objectives, Indooroopilly, Qld.

De Bono, E. 1992, *Six Thinking Hats for Schools*, Hawker Brownlow Education, Cheltenham, Vic.

Dover, S. 1994, *Sustainable Energy Systems: Pathways for Australian Energy Reform*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne.

Gough, N. 1992, *Blueprints for Greening Schools*, Gould League, Melbourne, Vic.

Lazear, D. 1999, *Multiple Intelligences Approach to Assessment: Solving the Assessment Conundrum*, Zephyr Press, Tucson, Arizona.

Nayler, J. (ed.) 1997, *Gender Up Front*, Association of Women Educators, Caloundra, Qld.

Smallternatives Working Group (Qld) 1979, *Smallternatives Personal Guide to Saving Energy and Money*, Second Back Row Press, North Sydney, NSW.

Western Regional Environmental Education Council 1993, *Project WILD Activity Guide/Project WILD*, Bethesda, Md, USA.

Kits (including audiovisual)

Curriculum Corporation 1998, *Discovering Democracy Primary Kit*, Carlton South, Vic.

   Materials from this kit include:
   Curriculum Corporation 1998, *Discovering Democracy Middle Primary Units*, Curriculum Corporation, Carlton South, Vic.

Department of Natural Resources 1998, *The WaterWise School Kit*, Brisbane.

Department of Natural Resources 1993, *Waterwatch and Your Catchment — Years 4–7*, Brisbane.

Websites
(All websites listed were accessed in May 2002)

CSIRO. www.csiro.au

Department of Natural Resources and Mines. www.nrm.qld.gov.au

Discovering Democracy Project. www.curriculum.edu.au/democracy

Energex. www.energex.com.au

Ergon. www.ergon.com.au/default.asp

Keep Australia Beautiful Council. www.kabq.org.au

Learnscaping Projects. www.nrm.qld.gov.au/education/community/learnscaping.html

Student Environmental Projects. www.nrm.qld.gov.au/resourcenet/education/students/index.html

Organisations and contacts

Department of Natural Resources, Locked Bag 40, Coorparoo Delivery Centre, Q 4151

Energex, Public Affairs Department, GPO Box 1461, Brisbane, Q 4001

Greening Australia, GPO Box 9868, Brisbane, Q 4001

Queensland Gould League for Environmental Education, PO Box 134, Albany Creek, Q 4035

Waterwatch, Waterwatch Queensland Coordinator, Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Block A/Gate 4, 80 Meiers Road, Indooroopilly, Q 4068

Environmental audit

Environmental Audits, Gould League for Environmental Education, PO Box 134, Albany Creek, Q 4035