

## LandLearn at Geelong East PS – Using the Biodiversity Audit Tool - Graeme Biggins

*“We’ve been using the LandLearn resources for the last couple of years. We started using activities from the LandLearn newsletter which comes once a term. Tanya, our garden specialist, began using the information about vegies when we put in the vegetable garden. They’re terrific - quality resources. The lesson plans are professionally done and easy to follow – they are well laid out. The school has three of the CD ‘s – if you told me the titles I could let you know which ones – I can’t recall just now – I know there’s one about seeds.*

*We’ve recently used the Biodiversity Up Close audit tool. I found it engaging and hands on. It gave the students valuable feed back on the health of the school environment. The students learnt a variety of skills including mapping, graphing, observing, discussing and collecting data. It gave them real life, relevant learning experiences through a connection with their environment, looking at weeds, understorey, organic litter and soils. We used it as a basis for our science program for two terms –one full hour lesson a week. I had a science undergraduate from Deakin working here and it worked really well. The kids are much more familiar with terms such as exotic, native and indigenous as a result – they are more comfortable with the language.*

*Some of the issues we had with the resource were that it was difficult to get a clear Google Earth image of the school –we really need a better aerial map. We found it difficult to get background information on some of the vegetation, particularly weeds, DPI, DSE and City of Greater Geelong all had information on larger weeds like Patterson’s curse – more agricultural weeds – and weeds like agapanthas, not really ones we would find on the oval like onion weed, cape weed and blanket weed. We had to get an employee from Turfcare to help us identify weeds. We found the assessment rating a bit tough – sometimes we got zeros – eg < 25% organic litter cover scored 0, and it could be time consuming if you did it in the detail we did.*

*LandLearn has added to what we do because we use all the primary activities in our curriculum – especially the experiments. I’m a science trained teacher so have a real interest in that area. The activities on weeds, vegetables and soils have been really helpful as we have included many of the experiments in our science lessons.*

*The most significant change has been a greater awareness amongst the students of biodiversity within the school grounds. As a result of the audit, one staff member is currently mapping the whole school ground so that each class has responsibility for managing an area of the grounds. So an awareness of what we have in the grounds from a biodiversity point of view is the most significant change.*

*We intend to continue using the LandLearn resources in our curriculum and we hope to increase the Biodiversity in our grounds by continuing to plant out the grounds and construct a frog pond as a result of doing the audit.”*

*Graeme Biggins, Geelong East PS - 22/10/09*