

DEUTSCHE SCHULE
DURBAN



ECO-SCHOOLS REPORT

2021



2021 Ecoschools Committee

The 2021 Deutsche Schule Durban (DSD) Ecoschools committee was comprised of:

Peter Deppe (Principal)

Carolin Ruppert (Grade 4, German Teacher)

Janet Schulze (Parent Liason, School Board of Directors)*

The Grade 5 Pupils (a class of 18 in 2021)

*The School Board of Directors identified in 2018 that we want to be more involved in corporate social responsibility programmes, and Mrs Janet Schulze is the Board representative tasked with this portfolio.

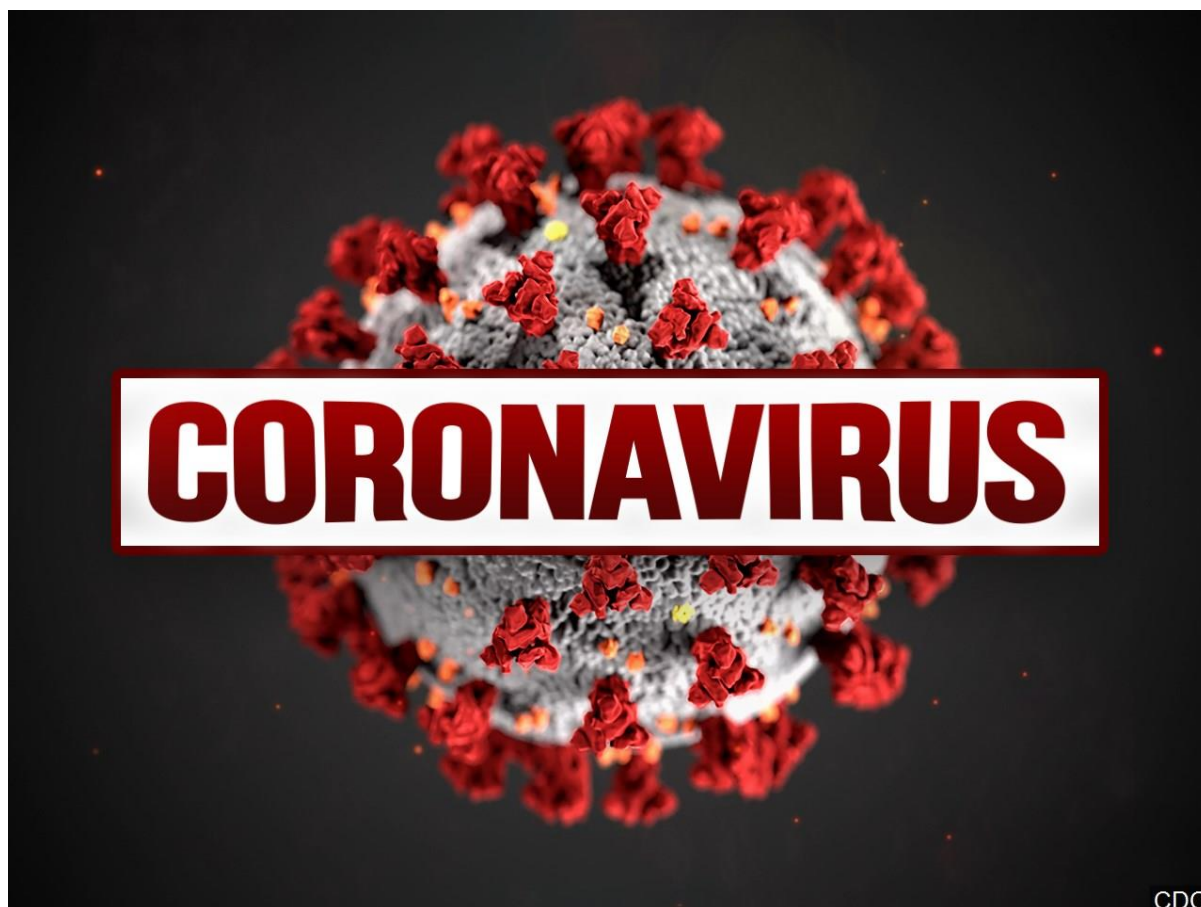
Our EcoCode:

Our EcoCode was updated in 2018 with the inclusion of an additional goal, namely “TO SHARE OUR FINDINGS AND EXPERIENCES WITH A WIDER AUDIENCE”. This includes feedback at school to the pupils via presentations and assemblies, feedback to the parent body via newsletters and other communication, and feedback to a wider audience beyond the immediate school community via newspaper articles, FaceBook posts and the like.



What thus follows in the rest of this document is feedback about the various activities the school has been busy with this year, 2021.

DSD Eco-Schools 2021: Action Projects (old and new)



2020 and unfortunately also 2021 will forever be remembered for the Corona Virus and the incredible impact it has had on not only our school and our country, but indeed on the entire world! Impact has been felt daily and in everything we do, and as a school we were not spared its influence and have had to conduct our school business in a very different way.

This has limited our involvement in Eco-schools projects and, paradoxically, probably resulted in behavior that is at odds with the expectations of an Eco-school. For example, as important as personal hygiene is, we have all washed our hands much more often than in the past, thus using more water in the process. Paper towels have been put out and so there has been more rubbish to discard. We have been limited by what has been possible and many projects, most notably those centering on corporate social responsibility initiatives, have not been possible this year.

The report that follows for 2021 is thus an abbreviated version of what we would like to have submitted. Certain projects have continued as they have been unaffected (e.g. paper/ plastic/ card and glass recycling) while others have been cut short or did not happen at all. Lockdown presented challenges and new ways of teaching and learning had to be established.

Herewith some feedback as to what did (and didn't) happen in 2021 at the Deutsche Schule Durban.

THEME 1: WASTE

1.1 Orange Bins In Classrooms - continued

Every Monday, rubbish bags in the school's neighbourhood are collected and sent to the local municipal dump site. The Ethekwini Municipality encourages residents to sort rubbish in a way that ensures that paper and plastic waste is collected separately and sent for recycling. To facilitate this, residents are supplied with and urged to place all paper and plastic waste into ORANGE bin bags. These are put out on the pavement together with the black bags on rubbish collection days, but are collected separately and sent to different destinations.

To piggy back onto this initiative, the school has placed an orange bucket /rubbish bin in every classroom and office in the school. All venues thus now have TWO bins, the "old" bin and an orange bin. The children and staff have been asked to use the orange bins for all paper and plastic waste, and to use the "old" rubbish bins for all other waste. The cleaning staff empty the contents of the orange bins into the orange packets, thus ensuring that it is sent for recycling. Previously, all school waste was disposed of using the traditional black bins.

Unfortunately Covid generated a whole lot of additional waste this year and our water consumption is likely to have increased as well. Our aim was to dispose of all waste in as environmentally friendly a way as possible. In addition to that, the Municipality currently does not facilitate the collection of Orange bags. The School Principal occasionally loads orange bags on his bakkie to deliver them to the recycling centre at the Westville Civic Centre, but this cannot be done weekly. The initiative continues so that the children learn to separate paper/ cardboard/ plastic from other waste, and we live in hope that, in due course, the orange bags will be collected again.

1.2 Recycling - continued

The school continues to collect glass bottles for "The Glass Recycling Company" and there is a glass collection bin in the school's car park where parents are encouraged to deposit their glass bottles. This has been in place since early 2015 and we continue to collect thousands of kilogram every year for recycling.

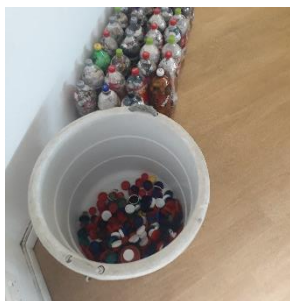
We are also still in the process of applying for a paper recycling collection bin from Mpact. To qualify, we have been told to collect 500kg of paper a month, for 3 months, before they will supply a bin at the school. Sadly, in spite of numerous attempts from us to get such a bin, this has not been forthcoming. We continue to push for one. A major challenge is verifying how much paper we have collected, as "our" paper is collected and placed onto a truck that has also collected elsewhere. We are not convinced that everything collected by us is actually allocated to us. The school collects large volumes of paper and cardboard for recycling, as well as old books. We frequently receive "donations" of (old) German books from members of the local community. These are displayed at school for parents and children to help themselves to whatever books they may want to have. Books not taken are collected by our paper recyclers.





Ronnie Recycler from Mpact paid us a visit in November and we hope to have convinced him that we are worthy of having our own paper recycling bin at the school! The day of Ronnie's visit coincided with an enormous load of waste, carefully sorted into books, paper and cardboard, being collected by the big Mpact truck.

We collect used batteries for safe disposal, as well as used computer cartridges. Parents are encouraged to bring batteries and cartridges from home/ their places of work for us to ensure that they are disposed of responsibly. Collection points for these are in the school's offices. Regular school assemblies are held at which the children are reminded of all the various items we collect.



In addition to glass, paper/ cardboard, batteries and computer cartridges, the DSD also continued to collect Ecobricks (see later), bread clips and plastic bottle lids as part of its recycling drive. The bread tags and bottle tops are part of the Breadtags for Wheelchairs initiative. **We were very excited to learn that plastic lids can also be collected as there** appear to be so many "out there". A big bucket has been placed in the hall and we collect all sorts of plastic lids – milk and water bottles, Marmite/ Bovril, deodorant cans and so on.



THEME 2: SCHOOL GROUNDS

2.1 Indigenous Garden - Kindergarten and elsewhere

Two new classrooms were constructed between November 2016 and June 2017. The construction process resulted in the need to completely revamp the Kindergarten playground, and this area continues to be re-vegetated using indigenous plants. In addition to this, a new playground was constructed for the school's new toddler class and the area around this play ground has also been planted with indigenous vegetation. This is an ongoing endeavor. The gate that serviced the old driveway to the sports field was moved, some tar was lifted and indigenous vegetation has been planted to arrest erosion and to beautify the area. The aim is to establish a beautiful indigenous garden with a sensory path leading through it – this, we believe, will be a lovely area for the children to explore and play in.

Plants used include: Natal Mahogany tree, agaves, agapanthus, spekboom, dyanella and aloes.

Parent volunteers, some of whom sent a gardener for the day, are responsible for helping out in some of our gardens - this is an ongoing process. A "new" Natal Mahogany tree was planted. This follows the installation of a subsoil drain as the 2 trees previously planted drowned following incidents of heavy rain. So far so good – the drain appears to be doing its job and the tree looks healthy.

2.2 Ongoing Project – Spekboom Garden



Our Grade 2 teacher and class drive a Spekboom project.

*Many dietes plants (which occur all over the school grounds) were removed last year from the edge of the paved area in front of the school to make way for the many Spekboom seedlings being planted to create a Spekboom hedge. Although growing nicely, these plants are still quite small but, once big and established, we hope to share Spekboom with all our parents, staff and other interested parties for planting elsewhere.

School assemblies have been used in which the children have been reminded of the many benefits of Spekboom, such as:

1. It improves the quality of the air we breathe
2. Spekboom is a proudly South African plant
3. It's water wise
4. Suitable for all seasons and weather conditions
5. It can grow as a hedge/ screen or as a ground cover
6. It's easy to grow
7. The leaves can be used for medicinal value
8. You can even eat it
9. It is beautiful when it flowers.



The bulk of the Spekboom plants were planted in August 2020 once we were back at school following the lockdown. More has been planted in and around the Kindergarten playground and we eagerly await its vigorous growth!

2.3 Solar Panels

Regrettably the installation of solar panels scheduled for early 2021 did not materialize. Covid related complications, including price increases, resulted in this project being put on hold for the time being. It remains a dream of the school to subsidise its electricity running costs with power generated by solar panels installed on the hall roof.

THEME 3: COMMUNITY & HERITAGE

3.1 Ecobricks

ECOBICKS – HELP US TO SAVE OUR ENVIRONMENT!

After previously handing over more than 800 Ecobricks, the DSD re-introduced this initiative last year when it became clear to us that there were many organisations who were still collecting them, and that many DSD households continued making Ecobricks.

We estimate that about 2000 ecobricks have been delivered to and redistributed by the school to date. The local Scouts group have also collected many for use in their charity activities.

A playground extension was built in our Toddler group and this involved making use of a steep bank. Old tyre casings were sourced to make the steps and these were partly filled with ecobricks to reduce the amount of soil and fill needed to fill the tyres making up the steps. In total about 20 tyres 56 ecobricks were used in this project.



3.2 Bread Buddies – not possible in 2020...

... but revived in 2021! Our Grade 1-7 classes routinely get a turn to supply loaves of bread and spreads that are sent, on a Wednesday morning, to a crèche in Umbilo administered by a former teacher at the DSD. Her husband is a church missionary and they have started a crèche for children from impoverished families and we have chosen to support them. This year, and due to Covid, we simply provided the ingredients for sandwiches (donated by our parents), whereas in the past the children actually made/ assembled the sandwiches here at school. We received a big, colourful thank you poster which we proudly displayed outside our hall entrance, but it blew off and was damaged before we could take a photograph of it for this report 😊

3.3 Partnership with Ukukhanya Kwelanga School in Chesterville – not possible in 2020 and 2021

3.4 Weihnachtsmarkt/ Christmas Market

On the first Friday in November the School usually hosts its annual Christmas Market, an event supported by an estimated 1500 visitors. Our School is transformed into a huge market with stall holders selling a variety of gifts and Christmas themed items. Stall holders rent a table and all proceeds go to the School, this being our biggest annual fundraiser.

The 2020 event was not possible, but an online market was organized instead. “Exhibitors” advertised their wares online, shoppers placed their orders and these were then collected from the school on Saturday 21 November 2020.

For 2021, the School participated in the Westville Country Club Christmas Extravaganza and, together with the New Germany Lutheran congregation, provided a real German flair to the event. The school sold 400 packets of traditional German Christmas biscuits as well as various Christmas crafts and the ever popular Gluehwein. In addition to this the school had a kids’ zone where face painting, Lego games, colouring in and letters to Santa complete with bright red post box kept the children entertained. In this way the school was able to impress on the wider Westville community the fact that the German heritage is alive and well in the area!

3.5 NEW IN 2021: We Collect



We collect is a new initiative that we supported this year. Every child in the school was issued with a large plastic bag and asked to return it 10 days later filled with as many textile products as possible. The aim is two-fold – to prevent textile trash accumulating in rubbish dumps, but more importantly for families to clear out their wardrobes and donate textile products in good condition (including toys such as teddy bears) to be made available to people in poorer communities to sell to supplement whatever income sources they have. The DSD ran this as an interclass competition that was won by the grade R class! Their reward was pizzas delivered to them at school. In total, the school raised about R5000 as We Collect pay Rxx for every kilogram collected while also supporting the

reach for a dream campaign. All in all this was a wonderful initiative to be part of. A letter of thanks from We Collect is attached to the email via which this report is sent.

3.6 LEARN Project

The school also supported the LEARN Project again in 2021, after doing so a number of years ago. LEARN (Lets Educate A Rainbow Nation) collects good quality second hand or preloved but no longer used/ read books to be donated to schools who do not have libraries. LEARN not only provides books but also training and support to such schools to show them how to facilitate the running of a school library. We were honoured by the generosity of the school community as hundreds of books were collected for the LEARN Project. A letter of thanks from LEARN is attached to the Email via which this report is sent.

THEME 4: MARINE & COAST

4.1 Beach Clean Up – not possible as a school in 2020/21.

For the past 2 years our Grade 6 and Grade R classes have spent a few hours on the Durban Beachfront near Suncoast doing a Beach cleanup. This was not possible this year, although the Grade 1 class did manage to visit Treasure Beach again as they always do.

Trained WESSA staff accompanied our group and took the children to the rock pools and provided an insight into the marine life along our coast.

4.2 Mini-SASS – not done during 2020/1

The main reason for this is that the school year was very disrupted by the Covid pandemic and that we frequently had teachers, pupils and sometimes even classes in quarantine. This put additional pressure on staff to complete the syllabus and also created concerns in that one simply never knew when next the school would be disrupted. Regrettably certain activities had to be sacrificed, such as the Mini SASS. We trust that 2022 will allow us to return to a degree of normality.

THEME 5: HEALTH & WELLBEING

5.1 Kater Cook – not done during 2020/1

The Grade 3 pupils have, for the past 6 years, completed the “Kater Cook Ernährungsführerschein”. This involves a series of lessons around the theme of nutrition - healthy cooking and eating. In addition to theory lessons about good healthy eating habits, the children are exposed to a practical component where they prepare various basic meals and dishes.

This culminates in the pupils preparing a meal to which they invite a parent, and at which the pupils act as waiters and waitresses for their parents. A short written test follows and the children are then issued with a “nutrition licence” to show that they have successfully completed the programme.



5.2 “50 Club” – reintroduced in 2021

To encourage more children to participate in sport and in an attempt to promote a healthier, fitter lifestyle, the school introduced the “50 Club” five years ago. During the second and third terms, pupils have the opportunity to run at school on a Tuesday and Thursday morning before school starts, and their distances completed are recorded towards the “50 Club” award. Children were challenged to clock at least 21km – a half marathon distance – and are rewarded with a special certificate for achieving this feat. However, many chose to do more than 21 and special certificates were also issued to those who completed more than 50, 75 and 100km.

2021 achievements:

40 out of 89 children managed at least 21km (half marathon)

12 out of 89 children managed at least 42km (full marathon)

3 out of 89 children managed to complete more than 88km, Comrades marathon distance.

2 children managed to complete more than 100km, doing 135 and 126km respectively.

THEME 6: WATER

6.1 In the curriculum/ on a school tour

Water is a theme that is important in a dry, (semi)arid country like South Africa. For that reason the topic of water is regularly addressed in both formal and informal contexts, and in many lessons throughout the year in various subjects. Grade 7 Geography for example looks at the importance of conservation generally, but also focuses on the need to conserve water and importantly to look after our wetlands. The topic of water is, for example, also addressed when Mini SASS studies are conducted.

The school takes its Grade 5-7 group on a combined class trip once a year. There are 3 venues that we visit, ensuring that each grade visits each venue once. Due to the nature of the 3 venues in 3 years cycle, this topic is addressed every 3 years in the detail described below, and is mentioned here from 2018 as “Water” was not one of our Ecoschool report themes in 2021.

In April 2018 the school's Grade 5-7 outing was to Umgeni Valley in Howick, where there was a strong focus on environmental issues, and most notably water. This included a visit to 2 Umgeni Water plants, the first being where Midmar Dam water is treated and purified before being supplied to households/ cities for consumption, the other to the Howick waste water treatment plant near the golf course where grey water is treated before being returned into the Umgeni River.



The children – and teachers - all found this sign rather amusing!

The visit to the sewage treatment works was particularly enlightening as it highlighted clearly just how badly we pollute water, and how much rubbish (foreign matter) actually is to be found in our grey water. Similarly, the visit to the water purification works highlighted how much trouble Umgeni water has to go to get water clean enough for human consumption. The VALUE of water is so easily underestimated as for us privileged enough to have it readily accessible it is not always seen as a scarce resource.

The DSD did not visit Umgeni Valley in 2021 but is planning to do so in 2022, Covid permitting, when the next 3 grades will be taken on the same tour.

6.2 Spring Water Irrigation

The school has a little spring – water seeping out of the ground – near its sports field. This water has been sent for testing to confirm that it is from a spring rather than an underground leak, and is now being used to irrigate the sports field. The school does not have the funds to channel this water into a JoJo tank and to install an irrigation system for our field, but a homemade hosepipe adaptor now allows us, with a little bit of help from the force of gravity, channel the water onto the sports field. There is not enough pressure for it to do anything but ooze out onto the field, but the results are clear to see as the grass grows well where it has been watered. One day we hope to have the funds to harvest this water effectively and to use it for irrigating the sports field properly.

There are currently 3 JoJo tanks on campus that collect water from the school roof tops. This is used to flush toilets whenever there is no water in the school (for example when repairs to water pipes in the neighbourhood result in our supply being cut). This water is also used to wash the 3 school vehicles.



Covid has caused havoc with so much, including our Ecoschools programme this year. In spite of that we were able to continue some projects while introducing a couple of new ones. Regrettably we were rather distracted by the challenges of Covid but are still proud of what has been done and achieved this year, even if not as ambitious as would otherwise have been the case. We pray for a better, more normal 2022, as 2021 continued to disrupt our lives and planned activities.

Report Compiled by:

Deutsche Schule Durban, November 2021